Collaborative literacy learning communities: What three Title I schools teach us

Carol Ann Esposito

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/rtds

Repository Citation
https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/rtds/2631

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Scholarship@UNLV. It has been accepted for inclusion in UNLV Retrospective Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.
NOTE TO USERS

Page(s) missing in number only; text follows. Page(s) were scanned as received.

147

This reproduction is the best copy available.
COLLABORATIVE LITERACY LEARNING COMMUNITIES: WHAT THREE
TITLE I SCHOOLS TEACH US

by

Carol Ann Esposito
Bachelor of Arts
The College of Staten Island, New York
1972

Master of Science
C. W. Post College, New York
1986

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
December 2005

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.
Dissertation Approval
The Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

September 13, 2005

The Dissertation prepared by
Carol Ann Esposito

Entitled
COLLABORATIVE LITERACY LEARNING COMMUNITIES: WHAT THREE
TITLE I SCHOOLS TEACH US

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction

Examination Committee Chair

Dean of the Graduate College

Examination Committee Member

Examination Committee Member

Graduate College Faculty Representative
ABSTRACT

Collaborative Literacy Learning Communities: What Three Title I Schools Teach Us

by

Carol Ann Esposito

Dr. Martha Young, Examination Committee Chair
Professor, Curriculum and Instruction
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Many school reformers endorse collaborative learning communities among educators since the mid 1980's to improve schools. Learning communities strengthen the school's culture of learning. Collaborative literacy learning communities focus on collaboration about literacy learning among teachers as well as the acceptance and exchange of literacy learning leadership roles by the literacy specialist and classroom teachers. This research investigates the three schools' culture of learning. Each school reflects a different culture of learning (i.e. highly collaborative, moderately collaborative, and non-collaborative). This study reveals reciprocity in learning and learning leadership and support from learning leaders maintain powerful communities of learning. Negative influences of the school's traditional culture of learning and threats to teachers' self-efficacy in their craft constrain collaborative learning and learning leadership roles. Recommendations are made for further research to support teachers' collaborative learning and learning leadership in Title I schools.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ......................................................................................................................................... iii

LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................................................... vi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................................................................................. vii

CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................1
  Purpose of the Study ................................................................. 3
  Research Questions ................................................................. 4
  Rationale for the Study .............................................................. 4
  Background ........................................................................... 12
  Foundational Theoretical Framework .................................... 14
  Significance of the Study ......................................................... 16
  Definition of Terms ................................................................. 17
  Summary ............................................................................... 19

CHAPTER 2  LITERATURE REVIEW ....................................................................................22
  History of School Reform ....................................................... 23
  Influences on Education .......................................................... 30
  Theoretical Framework ............................................................ 34
  Foundational Theory and Collaborative Learning Communities ........................................... 36
  The Traditional Culture of Learning in Schools ................................................................. 38
  The Collaborative Culture of Learning in Schools ............................................................... 40
  Leadership ............................................................................. 49
  The Process of Changing Schools ............................................... 57
  Discussion .............................................................................. 59

CHAPTER 3  METHODOLOGY ...............................................................................................61
  Introduction ........................................................................... 61
  Collection of Data ................................................................. 69
  Treatment of Data ................................................................ 70
  Focus ..................................................................................... 77
  Summary ............................................................................... 77

CHAPTER 4  FINDINGS OF THE STUDY .............................................................................78
  Qualitative Analysis of Data .................................................... 80
  Summary ............................................................................... 115

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Federal and State School Reform Initiatives ...........................................................6
Table 3.1 Research Participants ..........................................................................................66
Table 3.2 Demographic Information ..................................................................................67
Table 3.3 Componential Analysis .......................................................................................73
Table 3.4 Support of Foundational Theory ......................................................................74
Table 3.5 Support of Research .........................................................................................75
Table 4.1 Supportive Characteristics of Collaboration: High Agreement .........................80
Table 4.2 Supportive Characteristics of Collaboration: Medium Agreement .....................82
Table 4.3 Supportive Characteristics of Collaboration: Low Agreement ...........................84
Table 4.4 Constraining Characteristics of Collaborative Learning: High, Medium, and Low Agreement ..............................................................86
Table 4.5 Use of Collaboration as a Learning Tool: High and Low Agreement ..................88
Table 4.6 Constraints to Use of Collaboration as a Learning Tool: High, Medium, and Low Agreement ..............................................................90
Table 4.7 Support of Teachers' Perceptions of Literacy Specialists' Leadership Style: High, Medium, and Low Agreement .................................92-93
Table 4.8 Teachers' Perceptions of Constraints in the Literacy Specialist Style: High, Medium, and Low Agreement ..............................................................95-96
Table 4.9 Support of Literacy Specialist as Literacy Learning Leader: High and Medium Agreement ..............................................................98-99
Table 4.10 Support of Literacy Specialist as Literacy Learning Leader: Low Agreement ..................101-102
Table 4.11 Literacy Specialist's Constraints as Literacy Learning Leader: High, Medium, and Low Agreement ..............................................................104-105
Table 4.12 Support of Classroom Teacher as Literacy Learning Leader: High and Medium Agreement ..............................................................108
Table 4.13 Support of Classroom Teacher as Literacy Learning Leader: Low Agreement ..............................................................110-111
Table 4.14 Classroom Teachers' Constraints as Literacy Learning Leaders: Medium and Low Agreement ..............................................................113
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people for helping me complete my dissertation. First, I would like to thank and dedicate this work to the memory of my beloved daughter, Christine. I will never forget her inspiring words: “You’re so smart, mama. You go!” Second, I thank my wonderful son, Vincent, whose skill, eagerness, and constant patience helped me to complete this work. Third, I would like to thank my husband, Jesse, for his willingness to bring me to the next destination. Fourth, I thank my father for inspiring me to become a life-long learner. Finally, I thank my doctoral committee chairperson, Dr. Martha Young, for her constant words of encouragement. I will never forget that while I thought I was standing still, she would always tell me “Carol, you are making good progress.” Thank you all for helping me through this learning process.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The issue of school reform has been a societal concern since the second half of the twentieth century. Since the mid 1950’s our country witnessed a series of public school reform proposals resulting in a series of school reform movements. These proposals have been characterized by a bureaucratic control of education through a heavy emphasis on standardization in the curriculum and testing, increased student assessments, and added qualifications in teacher certification programs and student graduation requirements.

However, results from norm reference or standardized tests, criterion reference tests, as well as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reports from the late 1980’s demonstrate that public schools are unsuccessful in narrowing the literacy academic achievement gap between students. For example, standardized reading test scores of fourth grade students in certain Title 1 schools in the southwestern part of our country from a 2004 standardized test indicate almost 50% of fourth grade students’ reading scores remain in the lowest quartile. These scores report the percentage of students’ functioning in the lowest achievement quartile has not been reduced. The NAEP 2003 reading results of fourth grade students showed no significant change in the
scores since 1992 to conclude the gap in literacy achievement of fourth grade students at
the basic (lowest) level has not significantly improved.

School reform researchers view collaborative literacy learning and literacy
learning leadership by the literacy specialist and classroom teachers in learning
communities as an answer to strengthening elementary-age students’ literacy growth. In
place since the mid 1980’s, this paradigm in professional development provides a
contrast to the traditional culture of learning in schools. Collaborative literacy learning
communities are intended to enable teachers to meet students’ literacy learning needs by
ingaging in shared learning experiences with colleagues (Barth, 1990, DuFour and Eaker,
the experts in education and school reform since teachers are in the daily classroom
situation (Barth, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1994).

Educational theorists believe the social construction of knowledge leads to
zone of proximal development (ZPD) states learning growth occurs when learning is
scaffolded by a knowledgeable other. Dewey (1916, 1938) explained learning is a social
process. Effective collaborative literacy learning communities support the open
exchange of knowledge about literacy learning as well as support reciprocity in literacy
learning and literacy learning leadership. Learners are encouraged to become learning
leaders and learning leaders become powerful learners (Barth, 1990, 2001). In addition,
learning is spiraled through collaboration with colleagues because old and new ideas are
introduced and revisited. Collaboration supports Bruner’s (1977) work explaining the
recursiveness of learning. The theory of the recursive nature of learning explains learning occurs when learning is spiraled.

Collaborative literacy learning communities among educators improves the culture of learning in schools by raising students’ academic achievement, teachers’ sense of self-efficacy, and ultimately the professionalization of teaching (Barth, 1990; Fullan, 2001; Rosenholtz, 1991). Powerful literacy learning communities reflect democratic learning contexts because these communities produce powerful learning about literacy within a supportive learning environment. This learning culture lays the foundation for democratic schools. Dewey believed growth in learning supports democratic schools. These schools provide learning contexts to strengthen democracy in society (Dewey, 1916). Understanding the supportive and constraining factors of collaborative literacy learning is necessary to establish and maintain these learning cultures in Title 1 schools. In an effort to understand these characteristics, this research studied the learning cultures in three Title 1 schools. The following section explains the purpose of the study, states the focus questions, and outlines this chapter. The focus of this discussion is related to the area of perceptions of literacy learning and teaching in Title 1 Schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the literacy learning culture in three Title 1 schools through an investigation of how their perceptions of collaborative literacy learning and literacy learning leadership support their learning communities. The schools’ perspectives on collaboration as a learning tool and supporting reciprocity in learning and learning leadership were investigated. This exploration defined the culture
of learning in each school. These learning cultures provide the answers to school reform demands to raise the literacy achievement of students in Title 1 schools. These issues are considered within the theoretical frameworks of Bruner, (1977), Dewey (1916, 1938), and Vygotsky (1978).

Questions

With the purpose of the study defined, the following five questions served as the framework for this research:

1. What are the characteristics that define a learning community related to literacy learning and literacy learning leadership in three Title I Schools?
2. What characteristics define collaboration as a learning tool in the learning communities of these Title I Schools?
3. What are teachers’ perceptions of the literacy specialist’s leadership style as it affects collaboration in the schools’ learning communities?
4. How do the teachers’ perceptions of the literacy specialist’s role as literacy learning leader influence the collaborative learning culture in the three schools?
5. What are the teachers’ perceptions of the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader and how do these perceptions influence collaboration in their schools?

Rationale for the Study

The study investigated the three schools’ perspectives on the need for support in learning, as discussed by Dewey (1916, 1938), Vygotsky (1978), and Bruner (1977). The study was designed to determine the characteristics defining the collaborative learning
culture in the three Title 1 schools. The literacy specialist is influential as learner and literacy learning leader in learning communities (Bean, 2001, 2004). Classroom teachers also share in the responsibility of learning leadership within these communities (Rosenholtz, 1991; Troen and Boles, 2003; Wasley, 1991). Through interviews with teachers and literacy specialists, the schools’ perspectives on the leadership styles and roles of the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader were examined. The schools’ perspectives are understood as discussed in Vygotsky’s (1978) concept of the collective of people constituting the group. The purpose was to determine ways their perspectives affected the schools’ learning communities. In addition, the schools’ perceptions of the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader and the ways these perceptions influenced collaboration also were examined. To better understand collaborative literacy learning communities, the following section provides the theoretical framework of this research.

The rationale for the study is to provide background on why it is important to examine schools’ perceptions of collaboration and the ways these perceptions influence their collaborative learning culture. This study was designed to increase understanding of the influences of the traditional culture of learning in schools and threats to self-efficacy in one’s craft as literacy learner and literacy learning leader on collaboration. This review section is a discussion of a) the history of modern school reform, b) assessment issues, c) learning communities, and d) collaborative learning cultures.

History of Modern School Reform

The target of a number of federal and state initiatives since the mid 1950’s has been reform in education (DuFour and Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 2001; Levine, 1997). Table 1.1 lists the school reform initiatives from the 1950’s to the present.
Table 1.1  Federal and State School Reform Initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislation from 1950s to Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1950's</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• National Defense Education Act, 1958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1960's</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Economic Opportunity Act and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ESEA Title 1, 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Desegregation in Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1970's</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Desegregation in Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA), 1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Laws focusing on back to basics, standardization, and assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1980's</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Education Consolidation and Improvement Act, 1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A Nation At Risk, 1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tomorrow’s Teachers (Holmes Group Report, 1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Goals 2000 Plan, 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1990's to Present</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tomorrow’s Schools (Holmes Group Report, 1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• National Education Standards and Improvement Council, 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• National Reading Commission, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• National Reading Excellence Act, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• National Reading Panel, 1999, 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No Child Left Behind Act, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Comprehensive School Restructuring Demonstration Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gear Up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The call for reform began with the launching of the Russian spacecraft, Sputnik (1957) and became intensified with Japan’s ascendance to economic power. The federal government’s response with legislation in the 1950’s to create a teacher-proof curriculum was followed by three waves of federal school reform initiatives. (See table 1.1). These waves have been characterized by 1) the hierarchal control of authority in education, 2) a reliance on standardization in the curriculum and testing, 3) increased assessments for
students, and 4) the imposition of increased demands of curriculum, testing, and graduation for students as well as added certification requirements for teachers.

The first wave began in the 1960's and continued through the 1970's. This period was marked by the bureaucratic control of education by state and federal legislatures enforcing a back-to-basics student curriculum. Reform efforts focused on standardization of schools and curriculum through school accountability, student assessment, and budgeting reforms. This reform period was also characterized by a focus on equality in education and desegregation in schools (Du Four and Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 1997; Miron and St. John, 2003). (See table 1.1).

After President Ronald Reagan's report A Nation At Risk (1983) the public realized the gap in student achievement was not lessened and school reform could not be accomplished by standardizing students' learning needs. The second wave of reform, known as the Excellence Movement, began. President George Bush's Goals 2000 plan (1989) outlining eight goals to improve education emerged during this time. However, when these utopian goals were not realized, the federal government's efforts to improve education were refocused and the third wave of reform began (DuFour and Eaker, 1998).

The third wave of reform, known as the Restructuring Movement, began at the end of the 1980's and has continued into the 21st century. This period has been marked by a reliance on national goals and standards in education. During this period states received authority to control education and teachers were empowered to make site-based instructional and managerial decisions at local school sites. The International Reading Organization (IRA) (1998) established standards in literacy teaching for reading professionals or literacy specialists and classroom teachers as well as standards for
literacy specialist positions (Bean, 2004; Lyons and Pinnell, 2001; Vogt and Shearer, 2003). The reliance on standards in education continued as seen in the work of the National Reading Panel (1999) and The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2001) (See table 1.1).

This period also witnessed the swing of the pendulum of school reform toward the establishment of collaborative literacy learning communities among educators as well as teachers acting as literacy learning leaders within these communities (Barth, 1990; Carnegie Forum, 1986; DuFour and Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 1998, 2001; Holmes Group, 1986, 1990; Lieberman, 1986, 1988; Lieberman and Wood, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1994) (See table 1.1). These researchers believe effective collaborative learning communities strengthen teachers as literacy learners and teachers to address students’ literacy learning needs and raise their level of literacy achievement. School reform efforts enforcing a bureaucratic control of education have been unsuccessful in increasing students’ literacy growth. In opposition to this, many researchers support teachers’ collaborative learning communities as a school reform movement (Fullan, 2001; DuFour and Eaker, 1998).

Collaborative learning communities among educators thrive in school cultures emphasizing shared learning within supportive learning environments (Barth, 1990; John-Steiner, 2000; Lieberman, 1986, 1988; Little, 1981; Miller, 2001). These learning cultures strive to achieve educational growth. These democratic learning contexts support growth in literacy, establish democratic schools, and extend the growth of democracy in society (Barth, 1990; Dewey, 1916; 1938).

Assessment Issues
Hochschild's and Scovronick's (2003) research found many Americans agreed the purpose of schooling was to promote responsible citizens. However, a number of researchers agreed our public schools have not been able to prepare students to meet the challenges of a diverse society both locally and globally as an educated citizenry. These researchers also expressed pessimism about the public schools' abilities to meet students' diverse learning needs and achieve successful reform (DuFour and Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 2001; Levine, 1997). National test results since 1998 have reflected the schools' inabilitys to narrow the literacy achievement gap of the students in the lowest achievement quartile. These results were indicated through annual standardized or norm reference tests (NRT's), criterion reference tests (CRT's), and the National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP) reports. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a nationally representative sample survey of student achievement in the core subject areas. The NAEP governing board explained these tests measure what students know and can do as well as their ability to respond to what is expected of them. This board also stated these results are used to understand trends in student academic achievement. Contrary to Barth's (1990) belief about the inability of standardized testing to measure students' academic growth, society continues to rely on these tests as measures of students' academic achievement.

These results indicate public schools seem unable to meet the diverse learning needs of students in the lowest performance quartile. This also is problematic because of the annual yearly progress (AYP) provision of the NCLB law mandating every school in the country must measure their students' yearly progress in math and reading/language arts. Schools not meeting their AYP goals for two or more consecutive years will be
identified as “in need of improvement” and will be subjected to further bureaucratic control.

Learning Communities

Many researchers explain the need for school improvement has resulted from the influence of the traditional culture of learning in schools. This culture is characterized by a hierarchal control of authority and the preference by teachers to work in isolation rather than in collaboration with one another (Barth, 1990; Callahan, 1962; Fullan, 2001). Much of the educational research of the past 20 years supports powerful collaborative communities of learning to combat this influence and improve teaching and learning (Barth, 1990; Holmes Group, 1986, 1990; Miller, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1994). Furthermore, John-Steiner (2000) strongly supported “socially-shared” or “socially-distributed” cognition (p. 192) among educators when she stated, “Solo practices are insufficient to meet the challenges and new complexities of classrooms, parenting, and the changing workplace” (p. 192). This situation has led to teacher burn out, frustration, feelings of being overworked, boredom, and inclinations to leave teaching. Researchers agreed with John-Steiner’s belief in the power of learning communities. Collaborative learning increases teachers’ excitement about their practice, increases their spirit of collegiality, reduces or even removes teachers’ disenchantment and attrition from the workforce, and revitalizes the teaching profession. Learning within powerful collaborative literacy learning communities is vital to school improvement. These communities motivate and inspire teachers to share their knowledge about literacy as well
as the responsibility of literacy learning leadership. (Barth, 1990; Lyons and Pinnell, 2001; Miller, 2001; Rosenholtz, 1991).

Collaborative Learning Cultures

The strong support of a collaborative learning culture within the school results in increased student academic achievement (Barth, 1990; Du Four and Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 2001; Lieberman, 1986; Little, 1981). Collaborative learning cultures are described by school reformers as "the needed reculturization of the school" (Leonard and Leonard, 1999; Lieberman, 1986). Effective collaboration about literacy supports a shared vision of success in learning for students and teachers. Teachers experience feelings of self-efficacy as literacy learners and teachers when students' academic achievement in literacy increases (Rosenholtz, 1991). Barth (1990) added democracy in education is strengthened when teachers work collaboratively to improve their teaching practice.

These foundational areas (i.e. the history of modern school reform, assessment issues, learning communities, and collaborative learning cultures) served as the basis of the purpose of this study. To understand the influences of past school reform efforts on these areas and on the improvement of schools, an understanding of the historical and societal influences on education is necessary. The background section makes the purpose of the study clearer by explaining how these influences have shaped our system of education and why many researchers support educators' collaborative learning communities for literacy learning and teaching.
Background

Historical Influences to Support Collaborative Learning Communities

The beliefs in routinization, standardization, compartmentalization, and centralization characterizing the Industrial Revolution are evident in the schools' support of the hierarchal control of authority (Callahan, 1962). Teachers are told how to teach by administrators, district supervisors, politicians, parents, and the media. The notion of compartmentalization is evidenced by teachers' preferences to work in isolation rather than with their colleagues and teachers' self-perceptions as followers and not leaders of learning. The business ethic of cost-effectiveness is evident in the crowded classroom situations and the one-size-fits-all assembly line mentality in teaching and learning. The focus on standardization in schools is seen by the heavy focus on standardized tests as measures of students' academic achievement as well as the imposition of increased qualification requirements for teachers and for student graduation. Heavy work demands on both teachers and students also characterize this business ethic. This situation is further aggravated by societal demands for increased student academic achievement.

Societal Influences to Support Collaborative Learning Communities

In addition to these historical influences, societal conditions may further contribute to students' being at risk in their literacy learning development. Typically, many of the students living in low socio-economic environments are subjected to a cycle of intergenerational poverty resulting from negative family, environmental, societal, income, and language issues. These influences ultimately affect the physical, intellectual, and educational growth of these students (Kozol, 1991; Payne, 1998).
Schools in poor areas are characterized by a larger pupil population who lack basic amenities, a large disparity in educational spending, less qualified teachers, and higher levels of violence, disruption, and administrative turmoil (Kozol, 1991; Hochschild and Scovronick, 2003). Often, many of these students may start school with a weak foundation in literacy as a result of possible family variables including low education levels, low literacy levels, language issues, the absence of one or two parents, or economic factors causing many parents to work more than one job (Payne, 1998). Many students have high levels of transiency or absenteeism coupled with the lack of adequate instructional support at home. Many second language students in these schools may experience language related learning problems. Different teaching and learning philosophies may interfere with students' individual learning style or language needs.

The children's cultural background may pose additional learning problems for students. Teachers may impose their own cultural beliefs about learning on students causing the children's culture to be ignored and preventing students to make learning connections (Au, 1993; Danielson, 1996; Yokoto and Teale, 2002).

Given these realities, researchers have been supporting collaborative communities of learning to help educators learn how to address the students' unique learning needs. In contrast to the traditional school culture favoring teachers working in isolation, learning communities enable teachers to share their knowledge, ideas, and areas of expertise to improve teaching practices needed to increase students' literacy growth. Professional development occurring within a socially constructed learning situation enables teachers to participate in open, interactive, and relevant learning experiences (Levine, 1997; Lyons, 2001).
Researchers support collegiality as the means to help teachers improve their practice (Barth, 1990; Little, 1981, 1986, 1990, 1993). Little (1986) stated “... by working closely with colleagues, teachers derive instructional range, depth and flexibility” (p. 56). Little (1981) believed collaborative learning may reduce the uncertainties of teaching described by Lortie (1975) as being endemic to teaching. Establishing and maintaining school cultures supporting this type of learning strengthens the autonomy of group learning and discourage teachers from working in isolation. Researchers believe strong collaborative learning cultures in schools are vital in maintaining the kind of learning needed to improve literacy learning in our schools (Barth, 1990; Du Four and Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 2001; John-Steiner, 2000; Lieberman, 1989; Little, 1981, 1982, 1990, 1993; Rosenholtz, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1994). The following section provides the theoretical foundation for collaborative learning environments among educators as well as reinforces support for this form of professional development.

Foundational Theoretical Framework

The traditional isolationist mentality or “in-the-head" (John-Steiner, 2000) cognitive development theory prevents or restricts constructive professional dialogue to improve literacy learning and teaching. Effective collaborative group learning opposes the Piagetian theory focusing on the autonomy of the individual to control one’s cognitive development. Working together enables teachers to build a knowledge base about effective literacy teaching and develop a shared language about their craft. The collaborative process in learning is supported by learning theorists from the social-
constructionist and cultural-historical schools of thought. Dewey (1916, 1938), a social-
constructionist theorist, and Vygotsky (1978), a cultural-historical theorist, agreed
learning is a socially constructed process. Dewey and Vygotsky focused on the necessity
of the individual’s scaffolded support in a learning situation by knowledgeable others.
These theorists agreed learning occurs within a context supportive of mediated learning
through shared learning experiences. A collaborative community of learning encourages
and maintains this type of learning within a nonthreatening learning environment.

Vygotsky (1978) believed learning occurs first interpersonally and then
intrapersonally. This belief supports his theory of the zone of proximal development
(ZPD). The ZPD focuses on the necessity of a scaffolding approach in learning. This
learning support helps the learner learn new tasks and eventually become independent in
performing these tasks. Vygotsky also believed when an individual shares knowledge
with a group of others both the group and the individual benefit because the knowledge
sharing increases everyone’s knowledge base.

Dewey explained a shared learning environment invites and supports open and
participative learning. This type of learning context leads to learning growth for its
participants. Dewey added a collaborative learning environment supports the notion of
democratic schools because a democratic environment thrives on opportunities for
growth in learning. Learning is recursive (Bruner, 1977). Bruner believed learning by
nature is recursive and learners move through spiraling stages of acquisition,
transformation, and evaluation during their learning experiences. The process of sharing
and exchanging literacy knowledge in non-threatening literacy learning communities
enables collaborators to move through these learning stages while supporting the recursiveness of learning.

Collaborative learning among educators enables teachers to share the responsibility of education. A supportive learning context enables the learner to make connections in learning and leads to eventual independence in learning. Learning growth occurs as learning relationships among participants develop and become stronger. These communities scaffold and extend the participants’ learning through the encouragement and support of interactive learning experiences. The individual learner grows cognitively, socially, and emotionally.

As discussed, powerful collaboration among educators has been the focus of school reform research as an effective way to improve schools for the past twenty years. Understanding schools’ perceptions on collaborative literacy learning and literacy learning leadership explained the rationale for the significance of this study. This explanation follows in the next section.

Significance of the Study

Research from 1998 to the present indicates the literacy achievement gap between students has not been narrowed. To improve teaching and learning in schools many researchers have endorsed the establishment and support of powerful communities of learning among educators (Barth, 1990, 2001; Lieberman and Wood, 2001; Little, 1981). The significance of this study was to examine three Title 1 Schools’ perceptions of collaborative literacy learning communities and their teachers’ self-perceptions as literacy learners and literacy learning leaders. This examination was conducted by
investigating the supportive and constraining characteristics of collaborative literacy learning and literacy learning leadership.

The research examined a) the characteristics defining a collaborative learning community in a Title I School, b) the use of collaboration as a teaching tool, c) the leadership style and role of the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader, and d) the support of the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader within these communities. The study clarified the role of collaboration as well as the ways collaboration defined the participants’ learning. Studying the role of collaboration identified the schools’ culture of learning.

The research also raises awareness to the challenges of collaborative literacy learning communities resulting from a) threats to teachers’ self-efficacy as literacy learners and literacy learning leaders and b) influences of the school’s traditional culture of learning. These obstacles were the result of the teachers’ underlying values, norms, and beliefs about the culture of learning (Dewey, 1916; Donaldson, Jr., 2001; Little, 1982; Stokes, 2001). Literacy learning leadership by the literacy specialist and classroom teacher also was examined. These learning leaders support reciprocity in learning and learning leadership in collaborative literacy learning communities. (Bean, 2004; Lyons and Pinnell, 2001; Wasley, 1991). The schools’ perceptions and perspectives on literacy learning leadership became evident by examining and understanding the schools’ culture of learning.

Definitions

The following definitions clarify the terminology used in this research:
Literacy Learning Leader: The literacy learning leader or literacy specialist has been referred to as the teacher of teachers or teacher educator, literacy coordinator, consultant, mentor, staff developer, and professional developer (Lyons and Pinnell, 2001). A literacy specialist is defined as a certified teacher working at a particular school site without a regular classroom. This teacher is supervised by a school administrator and works closely with them in literacy-related matters. The literacy leader’s main responsibility is to focus on improving the students’ literacy learning and teachers’ literacy teaching practices. This research also referred to the classroom teacher as the literacy learning leader. Research supports the classroom teacher as a learning leader among peers to strengthen collaborative literacy learning communities in schools (Barth, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1991; Wasley, 1999).

Title I Schools: These schools receive supplemental funding from the Federal Government to enable their students to receive free or reduced lunch privileges, as well as improve their academic performance (Wong, 2003). The schools decide how their Title I monies are used. The funding may be used to hire additional teaching personnel, buy extra instructional materials, or fund special educational projects or programs.

Literacy Learning Community: A literacy learning community is a model of professional development valuing supportive interactive learning among educators to encourage, build, and strengthen literacy learning and literacy learning leadership roles. A learning community functions as a learning network among educators (Lieberman and Wood, 2001)). The community members engage in professional dialogue to problem solve and to engage in constructive feedback and reflective thinking concerning literacy learning and literacy teaching practices.
Collaboration: Effective collaboration is an interactive process of learning. John-Steiner (2000) defined collaboration as “socially-shared” or “socially-distributed” cognition (p. 192). This learning process allows educators to examine their practice, to ask questions, and find answers. Collaboration is the means through which learning occurs because the social and individual learning processes combine and interweave to lead to learning success for all community members. Effective collaboration about literacy leads to the success of literacy learning communities because collaborative learning invites shared professional dialogue about matters of literacy learning and teaching.

Summary

A number of students are at risk of not achieving academically and not becoming fully literate due to their many diverse learning needs (Fullan, 2001; John Steiner, 2000). This situation prevents these students from becoming independent and successful learners. The traditional school culture has favored teachers working and learning in isolation and has discouraged interactive learning among educators (Fullan, 2001; Lieberman, 1986, 1988; Rosenholtz, 1991). Collaboration gives teachers the energy to teach (Graves, 2001). Many researchers agreed teaching is becoming deprofessionalized, and collaborative learning communities can reculturize schools and revive the professionalization of teaching (Barth, 1990; Leonard and Leonard, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1994). This form of learning promotes educational growth, the notion of democratic schools, and democracy in society (Barth, 1990; Dewey, 1916, 1938; Glickman and Alridge, 2001).
Chapter 2 is a literature review and the methodology is defined in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 analyzes the data and Chapter 5 interprets the data and makes conclusions and recommendations based on the research findings. Chapter two provides a review of the literature discussing the need for collaborative learning communities. The chapter also reviews the nature and characteristics of collaborative learning communities and the role of learning leadership in these communities. This review explains the need for effective collaboration as well as the supportive and constraining characteristics of collaborative learning. The role of literacy learning leadership by the literacy specialist and classroom teacher, its qualities and dynamics, also are included to understand the role and influences of learning leadership in learning communities.

Chapter three explores the methodology used in this research. This chapter designed a qualitative research study intended to study the culture of learning in three Title 1 schools. The chapter explains the steps taken for permission to do the research. Chapter three explains the processes of data collection and analysis. Formal and informal interviewing was used to understand learning and learning leadership within a learning community. The supportive and constraining factors to collaborative literacy learning and literacy learning leadership were explored by investigating the dynamics involved in learning communities relating to developing roles and relationships, as well as the participants’ self-perceptions as learners and learning leaders in these communities. The data were analyzed in chapter four. Analysis of the data focused on finding consistent characteristics of each school’s learning culture. Chapter five is a discussion of the data based on interpretation to make critical judgments about the cultural patterns that
emerged from the study’s findings. Conclusions and recommendations for research and Title 1 schools were formed based on these judgments.

Maintaining democratic learning contexts through effective collaboration support collaborative learning communities. Learning more about this process of learning improves the culture of learning in Title 1 schools and raises the professionalization of teaching.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

School reform research supports teachers’ collaborative learning communities to improve literacy learning and literacy learning leadership. Chapter 2 focuses on research studies that are central to understanding the role of literacy learning and literacy learning leadership in collaborative literacy learning communities. The literature review includes the broad areas of: (1) school reform (2) theories of collaboration, (3) collaborative learning (4) literacy learning leadership, and (5) change. The following outline also reflects the subcategories under each broad topic. The purpose of this review is to lay a foundation and provide support for this study to address the five research questions.

These questions are:

1. What are the characteristics that define a learning community related to literacy learning and literacy learning leadership in three Title I Schools?

2. What characteristics define collaboration as a learning tool in the learning communities of these Title I Schools?

3. What are teachers’ perceptions of the literacy specialist’s leadership style as it affects collaboration in the schools’ learning communities?

4. How do the teachers’ perceptions of the literacy specialist’s role as literacy learning leader influence the collaborative learning culture in the three schools?
5. What are the teachers' perceptions of the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader and how do these perceptions influence collaboration in their schools?

The focus of this literature review covers the following topics: 1) school reform, 2) the theory of collaboration, 3) collaborative learning, 4) literacy leaders, and 5) the process of change. The purpose of this review is to provide support for the research.

History of School Reform

A consideration of the past history of school reform efforts and their effects on education and students' academic achievement provides a basis for understanding the current state of school reform. DuFour and Eaker (1998) explained school reform began with the launching of the Russian spacecraft, Sputnik, in 1957. Sputnik raised America's awareness that the United States was technologically behind Russia in the space race. The Federal government responded by passing the National Defense Education Act in 1958 and the public schools were blamed for the dumbing down of the schools' curriculum. A tighter emphasis was placed on science and math to remedy the situation and reform schools. The teacher-proof curricula were introduced and marked a definite lack of respect for schools, teachers, and professional development.

Fullan (2001) indicated the public schools' capacity for success had again been questioned and renewed calls for school reform were heard when public schools were blamed for Japan's rise to economic power. Public again were criticized and held responsible for our country's fall from its unchallenged position of economic superiority. These events sparked three waves of federal school reform initiatives and educational research beginning in the 1960's and continuing into the twenty-first century. The first wave of reform, beginning at the height of social reforms and the civil rights movement
in the 1960’s with President Johnson’s Great Society program, concentrated on equalizing educational opportunity and school desegregation. President Johnson’s Economic Opportunity Act and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (1965) initiated Title I to serve the learning needs of students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, these initiatives were not enough to meet school reform demands.

Miron and St. John (2003) explained the purpose of the ESEA was to “...lift urban children out of poverty by raising their academic achievement” (p. 5). These researches explained the ESEA provided federal funding through the Title I program for special education programs for students with learning disabilities. ESEA Title I financially assisted schools having a high proportion of students from low-income families. This act initially provided over one billion dollars a year initially with additional increases afterward. This financial assistance would be used to improve and expand the education of students with learning disabilities through special education programs. This act also called for the placement of reading teachers in schools and pull-out reading programs to meet the literacy learning needs of economically disadvantaged children. However, these initiatives were not enough to meet school reform demands.

Other legislation passed during this period was marked by sixty-six initiatives emphasizing hierarchal control of education marked by school accountability with a back to basics mentality. Darling-Hammond (1988) referred to these terms as the buzzwords of the 1970’s. The inability of these initiatives to reform schools brought renewed feelings of doubt and uneasiness about our schools’ effectiveness during the next decade.
The 1980's witnessed a new wave of reform. DuFour and Eaker (1998) explained the second reform movement focused on reforming the reforms and began with the passing of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (1980) and President Ronald Reagan’s report, “A Nation At Risk” (1983), written by The National Commission on Excellence in Education. This report started the Excellence Movement of the 1980’s and was characterized by a top-down control of education by the Federal government imposing greater demands on schools, teachers, and students.

Darling-Hammond (1988) indicated these reform efforts were initiated as a result of the growing malaise of the health of the system of education. President Reagan’s report concentrated on reform efforts not equalizing educational opportunity. This report renewed the public’s awareness to the need of addressing students’ diverse learning needs by raising standards and by reporting students’ scores on tests of academic ability and higher order thinking skills. However, Darling-Hammond indicated while schools can be standardized, students are not standardized in their abilities and learning needs. Darling-Hammond stated that focusing legislation on externally developed school policies to assure public accountability forces teachers to focus on following standard operating procedures and not on meeting their students’ learning needs. This researcher believed legislation standardizing schools damages the knowledge base of the profession and does not support the students’ needs. This report invited more criticism by school reformers.

Troen and Boles (2003) explained this report brought more attention to the problems in our nation’s schools from the low reading scores to the dropout rates. As a result new legislation began focusing on calls for periodic standardized testing, merit pay programs, and more strenuous graduation requirements. Troen and Boles indicated these
initiatives failed to realize their desired goal to improve schools. However, by the mid 1980’s public criticism of reform initiatives caused the swing of the pendulum in teaching to shift toward an emphasis on teachers’ empowerment in schools. This period began the third wave of school reform known as the Restructuring Movement and has continued into the twenty-first century.

Newman and Wehlage (1995) explained during the late 1980’s teachers were given the authority to engage in shared decision-making at local school sites concerning staffing, program and budget, planning time for teachers, and student instruction. Although schools now had the power to make their own decisions concerning school reform, decisions did not address educational matters. Newman and Wehlage stated that schools focused on marginal issues such as student discipline, staff morale, and parental involvement. During this time, however, interest in improving teacher education programs became evident.

Fullan, Galluzzo, Morris, and Watson (1998) noted the emphasis on communities of learning among educators as well as teachers acting as learning leaders within these communities began at this time with the published reports of The Carnegie Forum (1986) and The Holmes Group (1986, 1990). However, while it seemed teachers would begin to take control of their practice through collaborative communities of learning the top-down approach in mandating school reform continued with a reliance on standardization, rules, and regulations on teachers. This control continued into the next decade.

In 1989 President George Bush, Sr. revealed the Goals 2000 plan. This plan proposed six goals to improve students’ academic achievement and America’s schools. Congress later added two more goals focusing on promoting partnerships between
schools and parents and continued professional development for teachers. This plan resulted in the formation of a national exam system in 1991 by The National Center on Education and the Economy and the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh. In addition, The National Education Standards and Improvement Council was created by Congress in 1991 and endorsed state and national standards for curriculum and testing. State legislatures were given the authority to oversee the enactment of the established national goals and schools were given the autonomy to make site-based decisions about achieving them. The 1990's also focused on the importance of the literacy specialist in schools.

Bean (2004) explained the report of the International Reading Association (IRA) (1998) highlighted the importance of the role of the literacy specialist in schools and established standard qualifications for literacy specialists and reading instruction. A set of standards for reading instruction also was established to guide the leaders of curriculum change, reading specialists, and all teachers of reading. In addition, a series of reports were written to improve the teaching of reading in schools.

Vogt and Shearer (2003) explained federal directives were given to various commissions during this period to write reports about improvement in literacy teaching. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) issued their report to identify and summarize research findings instrumental to the acquisition of beginning reading skills and proficiency in reading. This report endorsed the need for school reading specialists to support teachers in their literacy instruction and provide teachers appropriate staff development to help them develop the expertise and competence needed for their literacy teaching practices.
To build and expand on the work of these researchers, the National Reading Panel was first convened in 1997 to study the status of empirically tested methods and approaches of reading instruction from Preschool to Grade 12. This panel, described by Vogt and Shearer (2003) as the catalyst for school reform efforts, submitted its findings to Congress. The panel’s investigation led to the passing of The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001. The NCLB emphasized all children needed to be reading on grade level by the end of the third grade. This panel also endorsed the need for school reading specialists to support teachers in their literacy instruction and provide teachers appropriate staff development to help them develop the expertise and competence needed for their literacy teaching practices. To achieve this goal the National Reading Excellence Act (NREA, 1998) allocated funds to many Title I schools through the NREA grant and the Reading First Grant. However, researchers’ criticism with the panel’s research shadowed suspicion of bureaucratic control. Vogt and Shearer indicated the report received criticism due to the panel’s limited selection of studies that were analyzed. Cunningham (2001) questioned whether the National Reading Panel was a bold attempt by legislatures to control reading research. As with Cunningham, Miron and St. John also questioned the effects of past school reform initiatives.

Miron and St. John (2003) explained federal legislation and various initiatives have been intended to improve schools. However, the effectiveness of these reforms remains uncertain because school reform initiatives of the past 30 years have emphasized bureaucratic measures that have been unable to reform schools. These researchers have wondered whether urban schools have failed or whether educational reform efforts have failed urban schools. Similarly, Fullan (2001) stated prior school reform strategies were
not able to bring about necessary widespread change. This researcher explained our system of public education has ". . . failed to produce citizens who can contribute to and benefit from a world that offers enormous opportunity . . ." (p. 6-7). Rosenholtz (1991) and Lortie's (1975) shared similar beliefs that teachers derive physic rewards from their students' academic success. However, researchers find these physic rewards insufficient to sustain teachers' interest in the teaching profession. Teaching is a lonely profession due to teachers' uncertainty of practice and teachers' preferences for isolation in learning. Teachers' lowered levels of self-efficacy are leading to attrition from the workforce. A further view was expressed by McLaughlin (1986).

McLaughlin (1986) believed teachers' intrinsic rewards rely on external responses. However, little in the structure of the profession offer teachers internal rewards from career advancement in terms of stages or plateaus. In addition, the profession lacks an agreed-upon technical core of knowledge to be used as guidelines for professional practice. This situation has contributed to teachers' disenchantment with the teaching profession.

Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) noted the educational goals of the twenty-first century are different than the educational goals of the past. Today's demands on reading and writing emphasize the need for meaning and information. Bransford et al. explained the contemporary view of learning focuses on the science of metacognition coupled with a constructivist approach to learning. The realization of current goals coupled with the knowledge of the new science of learning is necessary to cope with the dramatically changing expectations and conditions in schools. Bransford et al. noted this understanding is especially important in consideration of claims made by school reform
researchers of the deteriorating condition of academic achievement in schools. Many researchers believe schools need to adopt a collaborative culture of learning in order to remedy this situation.

Lieberman (1986) explained a collaborative culture of learning in schools is necessary to combat the top-down control of schools and achieve school reform. These communities provide supportive learning environments to encourage shared dialogue about literacy learning and teaching. Although this shift began in the late 1980's, the idea continues into the twenty-first century as a central focus of the school reform movement. Learning leadership by the literacy specialist and classroom teachers also has been emphasized. This discussion is expanded in the section discussing collaborative learning culture.

The school's traditional culture of learning, socio-economic factors, and cultural diversity issues affect students' academic achievement. The following section explains how these influences have affected our schools and students' literacy underachievement.

Influences on Education

Influences of the Industrial Revolution

Gilderhus (1996) believed that learning about past events enables people to understand the present situation. The current situation in schools is understood by being knowledgeable of its historical context. Callahan (1962) explained the philosophies and business ideologies of the Industrial Revolution of the twentieth century have impacted our country's system of education and are evident in schools' traditional culture of learning. Callahan (1962) indicated images of the school as a factory-model are evident.
The principal is viewed as the manager, the teachers as workers, and students as raw materials to be molded into products. These images reinforce the notion of the school as a business enterprise and reinforce a cost effective approach to education and have been reinforced in past school reform initiatives. Similar views concerning the school’s traditional culture of learning were expressed by Villani (1997).

Villani (1997) explained federal and state school reform initiatives since the 1950’s, emphasizing routinization, standardization, and centralization as methods of educational reform in schools, have reflected the presence of the business ethic of cost-effectiveness. This business notion is evident in the crowded classroom situations, a one-size-fits-all assembly line mentality in teaching, and in the compartmentalization of teachers’ working in separate classrooms. Not only do these conditions encourage teachers to work in isolation, this situation lowers teachers’ integrity as effective practitioners and reduced the professionalization of teaching. Barth (1990) had further perspectives on this point.

Barth (1990) stated that the heavy reliance on using standardized tests to measure students’ academic achievement and teachers’ effectiveness in their craft has made teachers feel less than professional. This researcher indicated teachers’ effectiveness as instructors has been measured by these formal assessments even though teachers have been recognized as the experts in their practice. Although research has recognized the need to measure students’ learning growth by a variety of informal and formal assessment tools, the reliance on standardization in testing continues. Aside from the negative influences of the top-down control of education, other conditions contribute to the reduced status of the teaching profession.
Students' diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds have compounded this problem by augmenting teachers' uncertainties about their practice. The following section explains how these backgrounds have increased teachers' disinterest in teaching and attrition from the workforce.

Societal Influences

Payne (1998) explained negative societal conditions have contributed to students' being at risk in their literacy development because low academic performance is related to low socio-economic levels. Typically, many of the students living in low socio-economic environments are subjected to a cycle of intergenerational poverty resulting from family, environmental, societal, income, and language issues. The causes of poverty can be related to such things as substance abuse, poor health conditions, obsolete skills, and poor education. Dangerous neighborhood and poor housing conditions also provide obstacles to these students' educational success. Disorganization in family life and parents' low education levels cause additional problems for children from low-income families.

Kozol (1991) found schools in large urban poverty areas have many nested inequalities as compared with schools in wealthier areas. His research revealed schools in poverty areas have a larger pupil population, a large disparity in educational spending, and less qualified teachers. These schools also have higher levels of violence, disruption, and administrative turmoil. In addition, many students in these schools lack the basic amenities. Students' inability to improve their literacy achievement grows into a larger future problem. When students have difficulties developing their literacy skills these students struggle to achieve grade level completion or graduation from high school.
Hochschild & Scovronick (2003) explained students' academic underachievement is related to their weak literacy foundation when starting school. These children have been deprived of literacy experiences that are essential for literacy growth. This condition can be related to family variables such as low education levels, low literacy levels, language issues, the absence of one or two parents, or economic factors causing many parents to work more than one job. Many children have inadequate instructional support at home due to the family members' lack of familiarity with the English language or low levels of education or literacy.

Yokoto and Teale (2002) indicated not understanding the children's cultural background may pose additional learning problems for students. Teachers may, either knowingly or unknowingly, impose on students their own cultural beliefs about learning or ignore the children's cultural background. As a result the children's culture is not recognized and causes children to experiences difficulty in making learning connections.

Fullan (2001) believed in order for schools to become more effective in addressing students' diverse learning needs, schools must "... break from the industrial model upon which they were created and embrace a new model that enables them to function as learning organizations" (p. 15). Building a foundation of collaborative learning in schools can enable schools to address school reform demands of meeting teachers' and students' learning needs as well as raise the professionalization of teaching. The following section provides the theoretical foundation to support collaborative literacy learning communities.
Theoretical Framework

Many learning theorists have agreed learning is a social process because people learn within a social context (Bruner, 1977; Dewey, 1916, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978). Theoretical frameworks of the social-constructivist and cultural-historical schools of thought focus on the belief in learning as a social process. The cognitive, social, and emotional development of the individual occurs within a social learning context. Both Dewey (1916, 1938), a social constructivist, and Vygotsky (1978), from the cultural-historical school, agreed growth in learning occurs within a supportive social context.

Dewey (1916) believed learning is a social process and society is perpetuated through the social nature of learning. All social life is communicative and all communication is educative. Society exists “... in transmission, in communication” (p. 7). Society perpetuates learning growth because “... any social arrangement that remains vitally social, or vitally shared, is educative to those who participate in it.” (p. 9). In turn, learning perpetuates society because living with others expands learning experiences, stimulates creativity, and emphasizes the need for accuracy of thought and word.

Dewey (1916) called education a form of bringing up or nurturing. For Dewey, a social learning context facilitates the creation of learning connections and shared learning experiences. Dewey stated “... any social arrangement that remains vitally social, or vitally shared is educative to those who participate in it” (p. 8). Interaction within the environment affects one’s learning because the environmental situation influences one’s genuine experiences. Although Dewey (1916, 1938) affirmed education is a social process, Dewey noted the value of learning depends on the quality of the group members’
interactive learning. The extent of learning interaction is determined by the individual
group members’ abilities to act as a community group. In addition, the educative value
of transmitted experiences is affected by the quality of life existing within the group. The
group’s aims and habits determine the group’s values and attitudes. These norms
influence the quality of the education.

The aims of education are to maintain growth in learning by sustaining
democratic learning contexts. Dewey (1938) explained the principle of democracy
preserves “free interchange” (p. 354). These environments initiate and maintain the
communication and transmission of learning experiences to encourage growth in learning
and perpetuate society within a democratic context. These learning environments support
democratic schools and preserve the notion of democracy in society. Society becomes
socialized when education is viewed as a social process. Social environments focusing
on shared learning support the notion of democratic schools. Dewey noted the aims and
object of education cannot be realized when shared dialogue and common interests are
nonexistent or not recognized.

Vygotsky (1978) focused on interdependence and intradependence in learning.
Learning interdependence eventually leads to learning internalization or intradependence.
Vygotsky explained learning occurs first through interdependence with others and then
becomes internalized or intradependent. His theory of the Zone of Proximal
Development explains independence in learning occurs when learning is initially
scaffolded by a knowledgeable other. This interaction results in the learner’s eventual
independence in learning. Collaborative learning environments support interdependence
in learning to make the learner intradependent.
Bruner's (1977) theory of the recursive nature of learning is consistent with Dewey's and Vygotsky's emphasis on the need for interaction or interdependence in learning. Learning is a recursive process and learners pass through spiraling stages of acquisition, transformation, and evaluation during their learning experiences. Bruner defined acquisition as the learner's ability to acquire new knowledge that may be contrary to or in replacement of previous knowledge. Transformation allows the learner to manipulate knowledge to make it fit new tasks. Evaluation allows the learner to check whether the manipulated information suits the task at hand. Learners move through these three stages in repeated cycles since learning by nature is recursive. Collaborative learning provides a learning environment supporting the recursiveness of learning.

Foundational Theory and Collaborative Learning Communities

Dewey's (1916, 1938), Bruner's (1977), and Vygotsky's (1978) beliefs about learning offer foundational theoretical support for the notion of collaborative communities of learning. These communities are built on sharing the responsibility of education through support and interdependence in learning. The social process of learning leads to educational growth. Nonthreatening social learning contexts initiate, encourage, and maintain growth in learning within the presence of scaffolded learning practices. The recursiveness of learning is supported through interdependent learning experiences. Dewey (1916) described democracy in education as utilizing a constructivist approach to learning by embracing shared learning experiences through the recognition of the continuous need for varied conversation, the importance of the presence of diverse personal capacities, and the avoidance of the rigidity of learning in
isolation. Powerful literacy learning communities provide safe learning environments to support interdependence in learning and avoid isolation. These communities provide an interactive learning environment to support reciprocity in learning and learning leadership.

Dewey explained growth in learning occurs within socially-constructed environments. DuFour and Eaker (1998) supported these learning contexts to address students' diverse learning needs and teachers' uncertainties about their practice. Such environments can improve teachers' sense of self-efficacy, overcome conventions of isolation in teaching, respond to learning-related uncertainties, revitalize teachers' interest in teaching, and raise the professionalization of teaching.

Bransford et al. (2000) emphasized environments conducive to learning growth must be learner, knowledge, assessment, and community centered. Teachers' interactive learning reduces the uncertainty in teaching by allowing teachers to share their expertise about teaching. These four perspectives provide the foundation for powerful communities of learning that support teachers in their practice by giving them what Graves (2001) believed to be the energy to teach.

Villani (1997) believed that a new paradigm in education which advocates community where everyone is engaged and working towards a common goal is needed. Similarly, Lieberman (1988) explained collaborative learning communities create a network of learners by building on the strengths and needs of the learners. Although the past twenty years of school reform research has recognized the need for educators' collaborative learning communities, the influences of the traditional culture of learning persist in schools. The following selection elaborates on the differences between the
traditional culture of learning and the collaborative learning culture. A discussion of collaborative learning communities and various collaborative learning organizations is included.

The Traditional Culture of Learning in Schools

Little (1981) explained the traditional learning culture in schools does not focus on shared learning among educators to share the responsibility of teaching and learning. This culture upholds conventions of conservatism, privacy, and teacher autonomy in classrooms, which Bird (1986) believed contributed to the “massive inertia of traditional teaching” (p. 56)

The schools’ culture of learning has been influenced by the business-minded ethics of the Industrial Revolution that focus on the notion of cost-effectiveness in learning. This belief, which supports an assembly line approach to learning by upholding a one-size-fits-all learning mentality, results in the disregard of individual learning needs. Overcrowded classrooms are also indicative of cost-effectiveness in education.

Lieberman (1986) explained past school reform initiatives have been based on the philosophies on the school’s traditional culture of learning. These initiatives have upheld canonical views of teachers’ professional development through a reliance on teacher-training models with fixed agendas. These models impose professional development on teachers with little regard for teachers’ individual learning needs or learning styles. Aside from these influences, other bumps and dead-ends discourage teachers’ collaborative learning.

Little (1982, 1986, 1990) explained the factory model of teaching has reinforced a workplace culture of isolation. Teachers’ occupational norms of autonomy,
noninterference, presentism, and conservatism persist in schools. Little (1990) described teachers' isolation as the "... greatest tragedy of teaching" (pg. 160). This researcher added isolation is also the greatest irony of teaching considering teachers' preferences for isolation are self-imposed and are professionally sanctioned.

Lortie (1975) explained teachers' preferences or learning in isolation have augmented the uncertainty in teaching and have caused uncertainty to become endemic to the teaching profession. Similarly, Little (1982) believed teachers' isolation was the greatest tragedy in teaching. Little defined the workplace character of the school as autonomous isolation reinforced by teachers' notions of their classrooms as their kingdoms or their territorial rights. Her research revealed collaborating with peers can be very threatening to teachers. Teachers fear being criticized or losing autonomy and privacy when exposing their methods of practice to their colleagues. In addition, isolation helps teachers feel secure in the thought of not exposing their possible classroom failures to their peers. Lieberman (1988) expressed similar views.

Lieberman (1988) explained some teachers believe in being practical and safe by being private. However, Lieberman added the price for working in isolation and loneliness is great considering the many uncertainties involved in teaching. Aside from teachers' fears of exposing their failures, bureaucratic notions of imposed professional development on teachers also cause teachers to prefer to work in isolation.

Donaldson, Jr. (2001) explained teacher-training models of professional development, shadowing the presence of bureaucratic control in schools, have reinforced the isolation in teaching and contribute to its uncertainty. These models deliver packaged professional development training to support passive learning and avoid a constructivist

W asley (1991) added school reform efforts focusing on professional development for teachers through a transmission or teacher-training model discourage teachers from acting as agents of change in schools. This form of professional development also discourages professional dialogue among educators. Teachers are told how to teach by politicians, school district supervisors, school administrators, parents, other community members, or the media. These decisions frequently bypass or ignore teachers' opinions or judgments and have caused many teachers to be unable to meet their students' diverse literacy learning needs. This discouraging situation has strengthened the support of collaborative literacy learning among educators in the past fifteen years.

The Collaborative Culture of Learning in Schools

Researchers agree teachers' collaboration helps them become more effective practitioners to meet their students' learning needs. Lieberman (1986) and Lieberman, Saxl and Miles (1988) believed the adoption of collaborative learning cultures revitalizes the teaching profession. Teachers' interactive learning within collaborative learning communities help teachers improve and enrich their teaching practices to be more effective in meeting the many diversities in the classroom. Collaboration also gives teachers the incentive to make adjustments in their methods of teaching.

John-Steiner (2000) described interactive learning as continuously supportive. Bird (1986) expressed similar views by explaining teachers avoid having "systemic inertia" (p. 45) through powerful collaboration with peers because collaborative learning
helps teachers share the energy to overcome the resistance to change. Collaborative learning offers teachers the opportunity to help each other become more informed and more effective as literacy learning and literacy learning leadership.

Little (1981) explained the belief in the power of effective collaboration or shared talk to improve teaching depends on teachers’ frequent, relevant, and precise talk about teaching practices. This researcher believed this shared language is necessary to cope with the complexities of teaching. Collegiality, open communication, on-the-job learning, trust, and support result from teachers’ shared language about their practice.

John-Steiner (2000) believed teachers’ solo efforts are not enough in meeting the diverse needs in today’s classrooms. This researcher supported socially shared or socially distributed cognitive development to address the complex learning issues in today’s classrooms. John-Steiner explained participants help each other to realize their strengths and weaknesses by becoming mirrors for each other. As a staunch supporter of the Vygotskian school of thought, John-Steiner stated, “...human beings who are engaged in new, partnered activities learn from the consequences of their actions and from their partners” (p. 188). Participants can understand their own actions, beliefs and work habits through comparison and contrast with their collaborating partners. John-Steiner stated collaboration enables one to “...achieve a fuller self, beyond the limitations and the talents of the isolated individual” (p. 188). Taking risks within collaborative support contributes to a developing changing self. John-Steiner stated collaboration allows people to rediscover, redefine, and broaden their individual possibilities.
John-Steiner (2000) referred to Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory by explaining collaboration “. . . provides a mutual zone of proximal development” for the collaborating participants (p. 187). Collaborative learning is a collective learning process because learning is socially interwoven. John-Steiner’s study (2000) revealed effective collaboration creates a “we-ness” built on “. . . a shared vision, patience and time, careful planning, and a chance to be playful as well as critical with each other” (p. 9). This researcher added the concept of “we-ness” is critical in consideration of the need to support reciprocity in learning and avoid isolation in education.

Christiansen, Goulet, Krentz, and Maeers (1997) believed collaborators must feel safe in sharing their views because each conversation discloses their ideas as well as themselves. The person is valued through the collaboration process, not the person’s knowledge, status, or ideas. These researchers explained a “middle ground” is necessary in collaboration so participants can express their ideas and feel safe in making their beliefs and ideas known to others. The “middle ground” is not possible where knowledge is hierarchically arranged. Maintaining a vision of learning improvement for students and teachers keeps teachers focused to the task of improving their practice and strengthening their collaborative learning communities.

Collaborative Learning Communities

Roberts and Pruitt (2003) believed shifting the paradigm of schools as bureaucracies to visions of learning communities builds effective learning communities. These researchers explained the purpose of the movement toward the collaborative learning community model in schools is to improve learning and outcomes for students.
As teachers collaborate, they are searching for an understanding of what effective teaching looks like for all the students in their school. These learning communities also provide a collective focus on the outcomes of literacy instruction as well as a teamwork effort in addressing instructional standards. However, Roberts and Pruitt stated that a shared vision is an essential element of a dynamic learning community. Similar perspectives were expressed by Sweeney (2003).

Sweeney (2003) stated, "Professional discourse is one of the more effective ways to create a common vision" (p.21). Sweeney, however, explained that developing a shared vision takes time as teachers begin to trust themselves and each other. For Sweeney, building a learning community and a common vision of learning improvement for teachers and students does not instantaneously happen. Collaborators need to learn as they travel along the way of reaching their learning goals. Sweeney’s views were supported by DuFour’s and Eaker’s (1998) beliefs.

DuFour and Eaker (1998) explained the term community reinforces a vision of learning for teachers and students by placing an emphasis on relationships, shared ideals, and a strong culture. These qualities support reciprocity in learning and are essential for school improvement. In addition, collaboration discourages learning in isolation behind closed classroom doors.

Miller (2001) believed a powerful learning community discourages working in isolation because the community enables participants to interact in positive emotional, intellectual and practical ways by growing professionally and personally. Powerful learning interaction with colleagues helps teachers gain greater self-confidence by focusing on meeting their learning needs to meet students’ learning needs. These results
support a vision of powerful learning. A similar view was expressed by Lyons and Pinnell (2001).

Lyons and Pinnell (2001) supported collaborative learning among teachers because they believed teachers' professional development program should encompass a constructivist theory of education to accommodate teachers' learning in a socially supportive learning community. Learners actively engage in small-group discussions around common concerns, introduction of new ideas within context, and the use of conversation as a vehicle for sharing experiences. Collaborative learning also allows teachers to use prior knowledge to construct new knowledge, encourages staff developers to focus on shifts of teachers' understanding, and provides additional learning experiences for teachers who need them. Lyons and Pinnell believed teachers' vision of success in learning is supported by teachers' professional development that supports them to try out new ideas in a risk-free environment with the support of their colleagues. In addition to colleagues' support, communication is an essential component of successful collaborative learning communities.

Wepner, Strickland, and Feeley (2002) stated that literacy learning communities are dependent on maintaining a vision of effective communication and dynamic shared learning. These qualities help educators understand the complexities of literacy instruction, take stock of students' successes and failures with literacy learning. Communication and collaboration also help teachers coordinate literacy instruction within and across grade levels.

Effective learning communities encourage learning and learning leadership roles by supporting reciprocity in learning and learning leadership. Barth's (1990) vision of
successful learning communities are communities, from which, powerful learners and learning leaders emerged. The reciprocity in learning and learning leadership results from teachers’ engagement in professional dialogue. Exchanging learning and learning leadership roles reduces the uncertainties of teaching. Other researchers have focused on reciprocity in learning and learning leadership as supportive to powerful communities of learning. This topic is further discussed in the section concerning examples of literacy learning communities. Limits to learning communities result from teachers’ beliefs and misconceptions about teaching practices. Stokes’ (2001) pursued this point.

Limits of Collaborative Learning Communities

Stokes’s (2001) research found not all collaborative processes are effective because teachers’ pedagogical teaching beliefs and practices are based on their underlying values and beliefs. Stokes explained teachers may perceive collaboration as being very threatening or overwhelming because collaboration may force people to expose their underlying set of norms. Although this study revealed the process of collaborative learning was beneficial for many participants to improve their teaching practices, many participants admitted the process also was painful. The participants experienced difficulty in working through the differences in their teaching ideologies. Stokes noted professional development must focus on ways to support teachers’ learning in supportive ways so new contexts of learning will be beneficial and non-threatening.

Little (1990) believed teachers need to recognize whether their collaboration efforts lead to well-informed or poorly informed choices. Negative collaboration occurs when poor teaching habits are reinforced within the community. Poorly informed
choices can result when inappropriate or harmful pedagogical practices and teaching philosophies are reflected, confirmed and adopted within the learning community. Although researchers have recognized the constraints to collaborative learning communities, the support of these communities remains strong in the research about literacy improvement. Various organizations have been organized to support collaborative communities of learning among educators. These organizations operate by bringing educators together from schools and universities to improve their understanding of literacy teaching and learning and to establish effective reform in schools. These organizations include The Professional Development School (Levine, 1997), The National Writing Project (Lieberman and Wood, 2001), The Literacy Collaborative (Lyons, 2001) and The Southern Maine Partnership (Miller, 2001). A discussion of these learning communities follows.

Examples of Collaborative Learning Communities

The Carnegie Forum Report (1986) and the first two reports of The Holmes Group Trilogy (1986, 1990) endorsed the need for the establishment of the Professional Development School (PDS) and the reform of teacher education as means of improving professional development for teachers. This form of professional development emphasizes reflective and collective goal-oriented improvement in instruction and a focus on standards in teaching to produce a professional conception of teaching. The PDS model enables learners to become learning leaders and learning leaders to become learners. In addition, Levine (1997) and Darling-Hammond (1988) believed the model of the PDS is one way to achieve professional accountability and raise the professionalization of schools.
Levine (1997) explained the PDS unites university faculty and school-based faculty to share the responsibility of increasing knowledge of literacy learning and teaching. This model also supports reciprocity in learning and learning leadership. The PDS model also clinically prepares new teachers for the complexities of the classrooms. This program offers teachers a strong knowledge base, promotes collegiality, and strengthens the commitment to continuous educational improvement by all teachers. Darling-Hammond (1988) endorsed the PDS model as the key to school improvement by revitalizing school cultures and increasing the professionalization of teaching. Various organizations have been fashioned according to the ideology of the PDS model.

Lieberman and Wood (2001) explained The National Writing Project (NWP) has been a model of professional development that focuses on consultation, problem solving, and program development through the development of mutual trust in shared learning experiences. This project focuses on strengthening reciprocity in literacy learning and literacy learning leadership. Teachers function simultaneously as leaders and learners working as a learning community. A professional writing coach facilitates teachers’ learning experiences as all members engage in constructive feedback and reflective thinking about their teaching practices. Teacher consultants, previous members in the project become teacher consultants and offer teachers workshops on different topics, suggest professional resources, or present important issues in literacy development.

Lieberman and Wood (2001) noted the pace and rhythm of the writing project design enables participants to interact in positive emotional, intellectual and practical ways. The NWP relies on teachers’ knowledge by respecting teachers’ expertise and by being non-judgmental or critical. Participation in the NWP is a transforming learning
experience because isolation in teaching is discouraged and shared learning in encouraged. Lieberman and Wood added this program is always being refined and revised because this form of professional development is "... sensitive to the lives and work of teachers" (p. 186).

Lyons (2001) explained the Literacy Collaborative (LC) program is based on the Reading Recovery (RR) Program. The Literacy Collaborative was a partnership between Ohio State University faculty, staff of the Ohio State University RR program and classroom teachers from the Columbus public schools. Established in 1986, the LC focused on the development of effective learning communities working within a multiple leadership design. Lyons explained the LC is grounded in Clay's (2002) theories of learning. As with the PDS and the NWP, the LC strives to eliminate isolation in learning and teaching and strengthen reciprocity in literacy learning and literacy learning leadership.

Miller (2001) described the Southern Maine Partnership as a school-university partnership. This partnership has grown to become a regional alliance including 34 public school districts, the University of Southern Maine and several other neighboring local universities. Miller described these regionally based partnerships as "third cultures" (p. 102) being neither schools nor universities. This researcher further added this partnership functions as an amoeba in smaller partnerships to respond to the professional development needs of teachers and also by encouraging and supporting learning and learning leadership roles.

In addition to supporting literacy learning leadership through collaboratives, researchers support literacy learning leadership by the school's literacy specialist and by
classroom teachers. The following section discusses the qualities of leadership, and the roles of the literacy specialist and classroom teachers as learning leaders in their schools. Included is a discussion about constructivist leadership efforts.

Leadership

Characteristics of Leadership

Researchers have studied qualities of leadership. Goldberg's (2001) research found leaders tended to share certain "large-minded" qualities. Leaders also possessed a grounded belief their purposes are important, serious, and eminently worthwhile. Goldberg noted leaders had the courage to swim upstream and go against the flow in order to secure their beliefs. Leaders also exemplify situational mastery in using their skills in matters considered to be important.

Leiberman, Saxl, and Miles (1988) identified key skills exhibited by leaders as building trust and rapport, diagnosing situations dealing with the collaborative process, using resources, managing work, and building skill and confidence in others. Leadership behavior relies on identifying, exploring, and clarifying new directions and goals, as well as staying informed, sharing information and power, and locating and mobilizing resources.

Lambert (1998) believed school leadership should be of a constructivist nature. This form of leadership is consistent with learning through collaborative learning communities. Lambert described this leadership as "...learning among adults in a community that shares goals and visions" (p. 18). Leadership is a naturally engaging complex interactive framework leading to broad-based participation among school
community members. Lambert added leadership works to further colleagues' learning by “... convening and facilitating dialogue, posing inquiry questions, coaching one another, mentoring a new teacher, and inviting others to become engaged with a new idea” (p. 18).

Howey (1988) defined leadership as the means to get others involved in solving problems. This researcher defined leadership as the means to develop a collective will among individuals to overcome many commonplace problems. Howey believed leadership is more than just knowing or acting because leadership is “... ultimately defined in coalescing others to act when they otherwise might not have” (p. 28). Leadership, however, can be transactional and transformational.

Schools are complex systems with many interdependent units. Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins (1992) referred to transactional and transformational leaderships as ways of meeting our schools’ complexities. Transactional leadership maintains the organization by carrying out daily routines. Transformational leadership gives people the incentive to improve their practices. This form of leadership supports, empowers, and generates teacher leaders because this leadership provides hope, energy, and optimism. Leithwood et al. explained transformational leadership can redefine a group’s mission and vision, renew their commitment, and restructures their systems for goal accomplishment with people not over people.

Donaldson Jr., (2001) also supported constructive leadership in schools. This researcher described this leadership as a flow of leadership resulting from the blending of leadership roles by all members of the school’s staff in response to students’ and society’s emerging needs. Donaldson stated true leadership can be evidenced in the “... synchronicity of members’ thoughts, words, actions, and outcomes” (p. 5). This
framework allows the members to coordinate their efforts to achieve the same desired results.

Profile of the Literacy Specialist as Learning Leader

Many researchers perceive the literacy specialist is the central force in establishing powerful collaborative literacy learning communities in schools. Wepner, Strickland, and Feeley (2002) noted that literacy specialists need to help teachers provide non-threatening literacy learning environments which promote risk-taking and guarantee success to their students. These professional developers also need to promote communication and flexibility among teachers, as well as congruence between reading programs in the school. The literacy leaders must also help teachers understand and benefit from the connection between reading research and actual classroom reading instruction.

Bean (2001, 2004) explained the role of the literacy specialist is complex and has been given many labels, such as reading specialist, literacy coach, reading consultant, and literacy consultant. The literacy specialist does not only work with students in pull-out reading groups. Bean (2004) stated this learning leader also works with classroom teachers “... in planning and implementing effective reading instruction for students and engages in in-class instruction” (p. 330). In support of these beliefs, O’Neal, Snyder, Scott, and Spor (2001) conducted research that revealed students’ literacy achievement increased as a result of the literacy specialist’s interventions in the school.

The literacy specialist must have extensive knowledge about literacy. Bean (2004) indicated the literacy specialist must have an understanding of the IRA standards in literacy by being knowledgeable of the reading process, theory and research,
assessment and diagnosis, intervention, curriculum, and instruction. These literacy leaders must also have advanced study in the roles and responsibilities of the literacy specialist as well as possess the skills to work effectively with adults. This leader also demonstrates the interest and enthusiasm for literacy learning and inspires this interest and enthusiasm in other teachers. Bean (2004) believed the literacy specialist must be a lifelong literacy learner by attending professional literacy-related conference and reading literacy-related research and sharing this information with teachers. Planning and facilitating teachers' professional study groups, engaging in literacy research and ongoing professional development also support this literacy leader as a lifelong learner. Bean, however, cautioned that the literacy specialist is not to be considered as an aide in the classroom.

Bean (2004) believed the literacy specialist's collaboration with classroom teachers about literacy learning and teaching is ideal for sustaining collaborative learning communities within schools. However, both the classroom teacher and literacy specialist need to know and understand their roles in the classroom and establish clear expectations of their roles. This understanding will avoid perceptions of the literacy specialist as an aide in the classroom and will utilize the literacy specialist's literacy expertise.

Vogt and Shearer (2003) explained literacy specialists are in great demand in schools as a result of the No Child Left Behind legislation of 2002 and the Reading First Initiative. This leader is instrumental in improving the literacy learning and teaching in the school by supporting a powerful learning environment for teachers and students. The current role of the literacy specialist is diverse. This teacher-of-teachers coordinates, oversees, and assists in assessing the effectiveness of school-wide literacy programs. The
literacy leader organizes and facilitates teachers' professional study groups, literacy committee meetings, family literacy events, community reading programs, and any literacy-related school event.

Lyons and Pinnell (2001) stated this leader models the behavior of an effective collaborator by being knowledgeable of working with adults and by demonstrating effective communication and social skills. This leader is the catalyst inspiring and producing reciprocal learning opportunities among all staff members. The literacy specialist engages in professional dialogue with teachers about literacy teaching and learning and research through planned professional development and informal collaboration. The literacy specialist also is expected to have successful experience working with students with diverse backgrounds and diverse learning needs. A further view was expressed by Donaldson, Jr. (2001).

Donaldson, Jr. (2001) called the literacy specialist a co-member in the “teacherhood” (p. 68). This co-membership allows this leader to “…shape and be shaped by colleagues in a continuous give-and-take that can have major impacts on faculty attitudes, beliefs, and even behaviors” (Donaldson, Jr., 2001, p. 69). Since the literacy leader is part of the cultural and social dynamics shaping the school, this teacher can understand and be sensitive to these dynamics. Donaldson, Jr. added the literacy specialist emerges from the community as a respected and knowledgeable colleague acting as a catalyst in the learning process.

The literacy specialist assumes both formal and informal leadership responsibilities. The literacy specialist is a formally appointed position because this person assumes some administrative duties such as organizing and facilitating school-
wide reading programs, professional development for teachers, and various literacy events. The informal leadership role includes conducting and evaluating informal reading assessments, suggesting suitable literacy instruction, and working with students in classes and in pull-out reading groups, and in-class modeling and demonstrating for teachers. Bean (204) expressed similar views.

Bean (2004) also believed literacy specialists need to work with teachers in classrooms to model and demonstrate lessons, co-teach, and inform teachers about administration and assessments of formal and informal literacy assessments. These leaders also suggest flexible student grouping strategies, and implements effective literacy intervention programs for identified students. However, the literacy specialist’s literacy learning leadership efforts need to be accompanied by classroom teachers’ learning leadership roles.

The classroom teacher is expected to assume literacy learning leadership roles. Researchers consider classroom teachers literacy learning leaders and necessary for school reform. The following section gives the rationale to support researchers’ beliefs.

Classroom Teachers as Learning Leaders

Howey (1988) explained the fundamental needs in our schools are “... highly competent leaders who reside where the problems are – in schools – and who can address these in a continuing, collective manner” (p. 29). Similarly, Barth (201) stated that “... the most reliable, useful, proximate, and professional help resides under the roof of the schoolhouse with the teaching staff itself” (p. 445). He also added that when principals encourage and enlist teachers to act as leaders it not only relieves some of their own
workload but it enables them to work smarter. Sirotnik and Clark (1988) expressed similar perspectives.

Sirotnik and Clark (1988) indicated any hope of significant and sustained educational change requires putting teachers in control of this reform since teachers are most helpful to other teachers. This researcher also believed school principals need to allow teachers the time for collaboration and assuming learning leadership roles. Rosenholtz (1991) agreed that the principal’s support of teacher leadership is vital for collaborative literacy learning communities.

Rosenholtz’s (1991) study documented teacher leadership roles and norms of collegiality in schools are strong in schools where principals endorse these behaviors as necessary to support the collaborative culture of learning in the school. These principals work to remove the roadblocks to teachers’ collaboration by allowing teachers the time to collaborate, set realistic goals, and share learning leadership. This research also found teacher learning leaders in effective schools display certain characteristics of collegial leadership. These learning leaders set examples of working with children and adults, assume more responsibility than other teachers in carrying out tasks, and value the welfare of the children as most important. These leaders initiate new programs, are receptive to other teachers’ ideas, and exhibit leadership skills. Classroom teacher learning leaders are very involved with committee work and curriculum planning. Rosenholtz added teacher learning leaders possess positive attitudes and are active learners by seeking professional development. These leaders are willing to grow and change as literacy teachers by trying and adopting new literacy teaching strategies. A further view is expressed by Wasley (1991).
Wasley (1991) believed classroom teachers have become the change agents of their profession. Wasley’s (1991) research revealed any hope of significant and sustained educational change requires the sharing of learning leadership roles among classroom teachers. Wasley believed teachers need to be involved in the restructuring of their profession by assuming these roles. Wasley explained these learning leaders do not advocate having all the answers to complicated questions about teaching and do not suggest all former practices be discarded in favor of new teaching approaches. Classroom teacher learning leaders create a working climate among their colleagues that underlines the complications and mastery of teaching. This climate has contributed toward raising the status of the teaching profession.

A similar view was expressed by Wepner, Strickland, and Feeley (2002). These researchers believed the focus on the role of the classroom teacher as a learning leader for peers and as a professional has had a great impact on teachers’ professional development and school reform. Wepner, Strickland, and Feeley stated, “... the key to school change is a knowledgeable professional in every classroom” (p. 116).

Danielson (1996) stated that teachers’ learning leadership increases the professionalization of teaching. Teachers’ literacy leadership allows them to grow as professionals by being informed about literacy and by increasing their skills. However, Danielson believed teachers need to continue to grow as professionals. While teachers’ learning leadership roles have been part of the effort to reculturize schools, the process has not been easy.
Reculturizing schools involves change. Change is complex because there are many dynamics involved in the change process. The next section discusses how the reculturization of schools is affected by this complexity.

The Process of Changing Schools

Fullan (2001) explained school reform through collaborative learning communities is complex because change cannot be imposed. Many dynamics are involved in the change process. Change can bring fear of the unknown, uncertainty, and resentment. Fullan added the process of change is a journey and does not instantaneously occur. The process is difficult because it involves conflict. Transforming schools from a factory model of learning to a collaborative learning model is challenging because teachers have grown accustomed to acting as decision makers about teaching and learning only in the privacy of their classrooms. A further view was expressed by Sweeney (2003).

Sweeney (2003) believed that some teachers avoid collaboration because they view collaborative learning as intrusive. The change in teachers' perspectives of collaborative learning takes time to develop. Sweeney explained, “Change becomes organic, building upon itself and evolving over time” (pg. 12). Researchers have also questioned how to change schools into collaborative learning cultures.

Barth (1990) believed change must come from within the school because teachers are the experts in their craft. This researcher believed teachers, themselves, can reform schools by acting as collaborative learning communities. Sergiovanni (1994) had additional perspectives about change in schools.
Sergiovanni's (1994) concept of change involved change within the entire school community. This researcher defined the school as a community of students, the entire school staff, and the outside community surrounding the school. Sergiovanni referred to a community of mind that involves the bonding between people resulting from the bonding to a common goal or a shared set of values and ideas. The community of mind helps transform a school from being a collection of individuals with different ideas to a unified group sharing the same values, goals, and ideas. Fullan (2001) expressed further views.

Fullan (2001) believed change is not confined; it involves all its constituent parts. This researcher explained all personnel at the local, district, university, and state levels need to be involved in changing the learning culture of the school by taking part in the decision-making concerning school improvement. The lack of support from the infrastructure is a “system problem” (p. 135) and not solely the schools’ problem. Fullan explained school reform is not a matter of imposing policies or requirements. School systems need to support collaborative learning communities as reform for schools by providing teachers the time, resources, and extra financial, professional, or educational incentives to encourage and support teachers’ collaboration with colleagues. Transforming schools from a factory model of learning to a collaborative learning model is challenging. A group effort towards this change rather than an individual one can ease the transition. This transformation becomes possible when the entire infrastructure of the school system from the superintendent to the classroom teacher values collaborative learning communities. Fullan also believed an examination of the purpose and process of change is necessary to avoid fragmented, disconnected, superficial, and episodic projects.
The discussion section summarizes the main points of this chapter and connects these points to Dewey's (1916, 1938) and Vygotsky's (1978) beliefs about learning.

Discussion

Hochschild and Scovronick (2003) indicated school reform has been a societal concern since the second half of the twentieth century. Federal and state legislation initiatives reinforcing a hierarchal control of education have not reduced the number of students performing in lowest performance quartile. Pessimism in the public schools' ability to meet school reform demands has laid the foundation for support of collaborative learning communities among educators. These researchers believe these learning communities can reverse the autonomous isolation reinforced by traditional learning cultures to enable teachers to improve their teaching practice through shared learning. Collaborative learning communities also rely on learning leadership roles by the literacy specialist and classroom teacher.

Learning leadership roles by the literacy specialist and classroom teachers are essential to improve schools. Lyons and Pinnell (2001) believed literacy specialists must understand the dynamics involved in leadership and learning. Literacy specialists are called teachers of teachers because they model effective collaborative behavior by demonstrating effective communication and social skills while building powerful learning relationships among colleagues. Lieberman and Wood (2001) believed collaborative communities of learning support the model of classroom teachers acting as learning leaders within these communities. These researchers support this model because classroom teachers are most familiar with the diverse learning needs of their students.
Dynamic communities of learning are dependent on teachers’ communication and continuous engagement in learning. Similarly, Fullan (2001) believed key words for school reform include “... meaning, coherence, connectedness, synergy, alignment, and capacity for continuous improvement” (p. 19).

Dewey’s (1916, 1938) and Vygotsky’s (1978) foundational educational theories, emphasizing the necessity of interaction in learning, provide the basis for school reform efforts in the twenty-first century. These theorists expressed their belief in the effectiveness of the social construction of knowledge to improve learning. Researchers endorse teachers’ collaborative learning communities because these communities are based on the construction of knowledge within a supportive social context. According to Dewey’s (1916, 1938) beliefs, the transformation and reculturization of school systems into democratic learning contexts improves literacy learning in schools. Improving and strengthening learning in schools strengthens the notion of democratic schools and perpetuates society.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Chapter three describes the methodology used in this study that investigates literacy learning and literacy learning leadership in collaborative literacy learning communities. The chapter begins with an introduction and continues with a discussion of the research design, preparation participants, procedure, data collection, and analysis. Chapter 3 concludes with the limitations of the study and a chapter summary.

Introduction

A socially constructed learning environment invites, encourages, and supports growth in learning (Dewey, 1916, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978). The nature of the learning process and the culture of learning within socially constructed contexts can be understood by recognizing the dynamics involved in learning within learning communities. Addressing the gap in students’ literacy achievement has been a focus of school reform since the 1980’s. Collaborative communities of learning among educators have been supported as an answer to school reform (Barth, 1990, 2001; DuFour and Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 2001). With these points in mind, five questions were developed to examine three Title 1 schools’ perceptions of and commitment to collaborative literacy learning.

The research addressed the following five questions:
1. What are the characteristics that define a learning community related to literacy learning and literacy learning leadership in three Title I Schools?

2. What characteristics define collaboration as a learning tool in the learning communities of these Title I Schools?

3. What are teachers’ perceptions of the literacy specialist’s leadership style as it affects collaboration in the schools’ learning communities?

4. How do the teachers’ perceptions of the literacy specialist’s role as literacy learning leader influence the collaborative learning culture in the three schools?

5. What are the teachers’ perceptions of the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader and how do these perceptions influence collaboration in their schools?

Research Design

Chapter three describes the methodology of the study. This research is a multiple case study based on a qualitative research design. Chapter three begins with the purpose of the study and is followed by information about the participants and a discussion of the interview instrument used. A chapter summary follows.

Merriam (1998) explained qualitative research helps to explain the meaning of social phenomena. These researchers attempt to understand the meaning people have constructed of their world. Qualitative research is conducted with the smallest possible disruption of the natural setting. However, Merriam stated a primary concern for qualitative researchers is to report findings from an emic or insider perspective rather than an etic or outsider perspective. Data collection and analysis is mediated through the qualitative researcher by utilizing ethnographic tools and methods such as interviewing, audio recording, and fieldnotes. Merriam believes the qualitative researcher is able to
consider the entire context by processing the data immediately, clarifying, summarizing, and being sensitive to nonverbal aspects of the study.

A case study is one form of qualitative research. Merriam noted the case study is "... anchored in real-life situations" (p. 41). The case study is used as a heuristic to enable the researcher to obtain a better understanding of a particular phenomenon. A case study researcher studies the whole phenomenon through an integration of its parts. The case study has a specific focus, is bounded or limited to the number of participants to be interviewed, and concludes with a detailed literary description of the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 1998).

This research was a multiple case study design because its specific focus is grounded in life experiences and has a limited number of participants. This case study has a qualitative design because of the ethnographic tools used in collecting data and the literary descriptive report to discuss the research findings. The researcher used interviewing, audio recordings, and fieldnotes as the tools to learn about the participants' perceptions and perspectives of collaborative learning communities. The analysis was conducted through an ethnographic lens using Spradley's (1980) domain analytic technique to uncover the culture of these particular learning communities within each of the three schools.

The research was designed to support or validate what is known about collaboration by examining the culture of learning in three Title 1 schools. The study investigated nine participants' (six classroom teachers and three literacy specialists) perceptions of the supports and constraints to collaborative literacy learning and literacy learning leadership in learning communities. This research added to what is already
known about collaborative learning communities in Title 1 schools. This study’s findings can also be used by professional developers as suggestions for implementing effective collaboration in Title 1 schools.

Preparation for Research Study

The researcher met the federal guidelines of the human subjects procedures by obtaining permission from the Institutional Research Board (IRB) and the Woodland School District. After obtaining permission to conduct research from both the university and the school district, phone calls were made by the researcher to principals in various elementary schools in the same district area. School sites were selected based on the consent of principals from three Title 1 schools. Either the principals or the school’s literacy specialist chose the classroom teacher participants. The researcher and the principal or school’s literacy specialist arranged the initial interview dates. Before beginning the initial interview, all participants received a letter signed by the researcher explaining their involvement in the research, reassurance of their anonymity, and confidentiality of their responses as well as any possible risk and cost as a result of participation. The researcher kept a copy of this letter signed by the participant.

Pilot Study

Prior to the research, a pilot study was conducted. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine if the pilot study participants’ understood the questions to be used in the initial interview and to clarify and adjust the wording of the questions where necessary. The pilot study also helped the researcher judge the value of the questions to be used in the initial interview. The researcher selected two classroom teachers from the same school and three literacy specialists in three different schools. The two classroom
teachers and two literacy specialists were at Title I schools. One literacy specialist did not work at a Title 1 School. All the schools were in the same school district as the research schools. These classroom teachers had three or more years of classroom teaching experience. The literacy specialists had three or more years experience in the role of literacy specialist at their respective school. The pilot study did not change the ideas of the proposed research. Only one question needed to be reworded for greater clarification.

Research Instruments

The study focused specifically on the culture of learning in three Title 1 schools and was limited to nine participants. The researcher used interviewing, audio recordings, and fieldnotes as the ethnographic tools to learn about the participants’ perceptions and perspectives of collaborative learning communities. The study was conducted in two parts to include a semi-structured initial interview (Appendices I and II.) and two semi-structured follow-up interviews (Appendices III through XIII.) All interviews were conducted person to person. The source of the questions and conversation prompts used during the interview sessions were based on research about collaboration and the participants’ responses. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) noted the importance of realizing and limiting preconceptions about informants as well as becoming responsive to informants’ concerns. This awareness and responsiveness helps ethnographers write fieldnotes in ways to “... capture and preserve indigenous meanings” (p. 12).

The results of this study were to increase understanding of literacy learning and literacy learning leadership in Title 1 schools. The schools’ perceptions of collaborative literacy learning were examined through the participants’ responses concerning the
supportive and constraining factors to collaborative literacy learning and literacy learning leadership by the literacy specialist and classroom teacher.

Participants

This research included nine participants (eight females and one male) from three Title 1 Schools. Table 3.1 lists the participants, their schools, and their grade assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.1 Research Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Landmark&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Covey&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Farsey&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents from each school included two classroom teachers with two or more years of classroom teaching experience at that school and a literacy specialist with three or more years experience in the literacy specialist position at that school. The participants were asked to indicate their advanced degrees and certifications in reading. Table 3.2 reflects this information.
Table 3.2  Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Years as Specialist in School</th>
<th>Number of Years as Classroom Teacher</th>
<th>Advanced Degree</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Landmark Ele. School&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>13 - 16</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>M. Ed., TESL</td>
<td>Classroom Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>8 - 12</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>3 - 5</td>
<td>3 - 5</td>
<td>M. Ed. In Literacy</td>
<td>Literacy Specialist 13 - 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Covey Ele. School&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>2 - 4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>2 - 4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>3 - 5</td>
<td>3 - 5</td>
<td>Literacy Endorsement</td>
<td>17+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Farsey Ele. School&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>13 - 16</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesse</td>
<td>13 - 16</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>TESL</td>
<td>Classroom Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lona</td>
<td>6 - 7</td>
<td>6 - 7</td>
<td>Reading Specialist</td>
<td>Literacy Specialist 6 - 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 indicates one literacy specialist and one classroom teacher earned masters degrees and two literacy specialists have certification as a literacy specialist.

Research Procedure

This research study was conducted and was limited to three public Title I schools in the “Woodland School District,” a pseudonym. This district was located in a southwest region of the United States in a large urban city. Most of the elementary schools in this school district region were more than 50% Hispanic. Interviewing was the main instrument used in this research. It is the background from Bruner (1996), Dewey
(1916, 1938), and Vygotsky (1978) that gives the rationale for hearing the voices of the people to understand their ideas and beliefs through external tools such as language and culture. Bruner referred to culture as the “toolkit” to be used to understand peoples’ ideas and behavior. Dewey called the tongue a tool and Vygotsky believed language is the tool to understand people because thought and language are related in reciprocal relationship to each other. The participants were asked to respond to questions in an initial interview and two follow-up interviews. The additional interviews or member checks were needed for further clarification and for consistency of themes across the responses to assure the internal validity of emergent findings. All interviews were scheduled according to participants’ and researcher’s availability. All interviews took approximately forty-five minutes and the questions focused on the participants’ perspectives on collaborative literacy learning and literacy learning leadership. The initial interview for all respondents was semi-formal and consisted of descriptive, interpretive and ideal position structured questions. The classroom teachers’ questions differed from the literacy specialists’ questions. (Appendix I for classroom teachers; and Appendix II for literacy specialists).

Initial interview questions for the classroom teachers included the following topics:

a) key support to professional practice
b) benefits of collaboration to teaching practice
c) a description of the characteristics of an effective literacy leader (literacy specialist)
d) factors to discourage classroom teachers’ literacy learning leadership roles.

Initial interview questions for the literacy specialists included the following topics:
a. their perspectives on the benefits of teachers' collaboration about literacy learning and teaching

b. their definition of a literacy learning community

c. a description of themselves as effective and ineffective literacy leaders

d. an explanation of the classroom teachers’ influence on their roles as literacy leaders

The first follow-up interview for all participants included open-ended questions. The number of questions varied for each participant. (Appendices III through XI.) Two semi-structured descriptive questions were asked in the second follow-up interviews. One set of questions was used for the classroom teachers and one set for the literacy specialists. (Appendix XII for classroom teachers; and Appendix XIII for literacy specialists.)

Collection of Data

Combined data included participants’ responses, audio recordings of interviews, field notes taken during and after interviewing, and transcriptions of interviews. The tape recording of interviews was necessary to ensure accuracy and minimize possible note-taking errors. Fieldnotes were written during and after each interview session to capture the indigenous meaning of the participants’ statements. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) defined fieldnotes as written accounts of others’ experiences and concerns written through the person and perspectives of the ethnographer. These researchers also noted that realizing and limiting preconceptions about informants as well as becoming
responsive to informants’ concerns help ethnographers write fieldnotes in ways to “... capture and preserve indigenous meanings” (p. 12).

Interviews were transcribed and analyzed soon after each interview to enable the researcher to reflect on the information and to alert the researcher to the necessity of refining or verifying ideas. Merriam (1998) stated “... the right way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection” (p. 162). Data were then triangulated to give the researcher more of an in-depth understanding of the research. Comparisons and contrasts were made from all collected data for cultural patterns in the data. Merriam (1998) cautioned the participant’s mood, health condition, or possible ulterior motive could influence the participants’ responses during interviewing (Merriam, 1998). The researcher was conscious of these influences while analyzing the data.

Treatment of Data

Data Analysis

Transcriptions of interviews were coded to help the researcher easily locate specific pieces of information. The researcher triangulated the data from the interviews, tape recordings, and fieldnotes to search for contradictory or confirming statements. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) explained that using different methods or triangulating the data to understand the phenomena gives the researcher more of an in-depth understanding of the research.

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) also indicated that the researcher codes and categorizes the data and begins this process early in the data collection process. The data were coded and placed into appropriate domains and taxonomies to search for cultural
meanings. Spradley (1980) defined these domains as "... a category of cultural meaning that includes smaller categories" (p. 98). This researcher explained these cultural domains are embedded in what has been recorded. Each domain contained only relevant research information and the domain's name was reflective of its information. These domains and taxonomies were refined each time new data were collected. Examples of domains included: a) influences of the traditional culture of learning, b) threats to self-efficacy in one's practice, and c) catalyst for learning and learning leadership. Examples of taxonomies included the following: a) personality differences, b) acting as a learner and learning leader, and c) the need to conform as a follower. The domains and taxonomies were then combined into a componential analysis and analyzed in terms of "high agreement", "medium agreement", and "low agreement" among the three schools concerning supportive and constraining characteristics of literacy learning and literacy learning leadership.

The use of the terms "high," "medium," and "low" agreement express the degree of collaboration. "High" means eight or more participants agreed, "medium" means five through seven agreed, and "low" means four or fewer agreed. It is important to realize that in the tables reflecting constraining characteristics, (i.e. table 4.4), high agreement means high agreement for negative factors, medium means medium agreement for negative characteristics, and low agreement means low consensus for negative factors. In terms of support, high agreement would be desirable. However, in terms of constraints, the high agreement becomes an undesirable factor in terms of literacy learning and collaboration. In addition, there are occasions where low agreement for constraints proves undesirable for support of an effective literacy learning community.
Making a componential analysis enabled the researcher to determine the cultural themes or patterns of the culture of learning in the three schools. Spradley (1980) defined a cultural theme as “Any principle recurrent in a number of domains, tacit or explicit, and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning” (p. 141).

The componential analysis included cover terms, included terms, themes, reoccurring variables or possibilities, and school metaphors. Table 3.3 illustrates a componential analysis.
Table 3.3 Componential Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cover Term</th>
<th>Included Term</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Reoccurring Variables / Possibilities</th>
<th>School Metaphors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are the characteristics that define a learning community related to literacy learning and literacy learning leadership in three Title I Schools?</td>
<td>Literacy Learning Community</td>
<td>Accepting Help</td>
<td>Learning Reciprocity</td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What characteristics define collaboration as a learning tool in the learning communities of these Title I Schools?</td>
<td>Collaborative Learning Leadership</td>
<td>Learning and Leadership Support</td>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What are teachers' perceptions of the literacy specialist's leadership style as it affects collaboration in the schools' learning communities?</td>
<td>Literacy Specialist Professional Learning Leader</td>
<td>Unfamiliarity Disinterest</td>
<td>Wishful Thinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How do the teachers' perceptions of the literacy specialist's role as literacy learning leader influence the collaborative learning culture in the three schools?</td>
<td>Literacy Learning Leader Literacy Expert</td>
<td>In-Road Support Group</td>
<td>Wishful Thinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What are the teachers' perceptions of the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader and how do these perceptions influence collaboration in their schools?</td>
<td>Classroom Teacher Literacy Learning Leader</td>
<td>Self-Fulfilling Notoriety</td>
<td>Deserted Island</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
An example of a cover term is “classroom teacher learning leader.” An included term is “leadership.” The theme is “self-fulfilling.” A reoccurring variable or possibility is “notoriety.” An appropriate school metaphor is “island.” This example explains that this Title I school believed classroom teachers choose literacy learning leadership among their peers for self-fulfilling reasons. The metaphor describes this school as disinterested in collaboration about literacy learning with colleagues.

The participants’ interview responses were used to report evidence supporting foundational educational theory and educational research concerning collaborative literacy learning communities and literacy learning leadership. See Tables 3.4 and 3.5 as examples.

Table 3.4 Support of Foundational Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Domain</th>
<th>Participant’s Response</th>
<th>Claims Related to Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Construction of Knowledge</td>
<td>“We all need to grow together as learners.”</td>
<td>Dewey (1916, 1938)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Leadership</td>
<td>“Sue makes me a stronger literacy learner and literacy learning leader.”</td>
<td>Vygotsky (1978)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recursive Nature of Learning</td>
<td>“Feedback between the literacy specialist and me makes us both stronger as learners because this feedback strengthens our literacy learning and teaching.”</td>
<td>Bruner (1977)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.4 illustrates the researcher relied on foundational educational theory with respect to the social process of learning as explained by Dewey (1938, 1916) and Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner’s (1977) theory of the recursive nature of learning. The participants’ responses reflect these theorists’ beliefs about collaborative learning.

Table 3.5  Support of Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Domain</th>
<th>Participant’s Response</th>
<th>Researcher(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Construction of Knowledge</td>
<td>&quot;We get smarter by working and learning together.&quot;</td>
<td>John-Steiner (2000); Sweeney (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Leadership</td>
<td>&quot;I believe group learning leadership is necessary for literacy learning.&quot;</td>
<td>Lieberman &amp; Wood (2001); Donaldson; Jr. (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Literacy Specialist</td>
<td>&quot;Sue's passion and excitement for literacy is contagious.&quot;</td>
<td>Bean (2001, 2004); Lyons &amp; Pinnell (2001)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5 indicates the presence of school reform researchers’ beliefs in the (i.e. Bean, 2001, 2004; Barth, 1990, 2001; Donaldson, Jr., 2001) participants’ responses. These beliefs concern the need for the social construction of knowledge and the importance of literacy learning leadership and the literacy specialist in collaborative literacy learning communities.
Data Triangulation

Janesick (1998) explained one basic type of data triangulation involves the use of a variety of data sources in a study. The researcher triangulated the data to confirm findings as well as assure the internal validity of the data (Merriam, 1998). Data from interview responses, tape recordings, and fieldnotes were triangulated to search for contradictory or confirming statements.

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) explained the researcher uses data triangulation as a heuristic tool. Triangulating data assisted the researcher in forming conclusions about the dynamics involved in collaboration, roles and relationships developing in teachers' learning communities, as well as the effects of literacy learning leadership on collaboration and learning within these communities.

Data triangulation helped the researcher have a greater understanding of the participants' perceptions of this type of professional development. This process also gave the researcher a clearer understanding of connections to foundational educational theory and research relating to the nature of learning, the culture of learning in schools, learning as a social process, the connections between learning communities and the process of socially shared learning. Data triangulation also explained the influences of these communities on teachers' professional development. The combination of this information enabled the researcher to understand the participants' disposition toward learning within a social context and their reliance on this form of professional development. This research added to what is already known about the process and culture of learning as well as its potential for being effective professional development for educators in improving literacy learning and teaching practices.
Focus

A primary focus of this research was to examine teachers' perspectives and perceptions of collaborative learning communities among teachers and learning leadership. This study explained the limits and benefits of collaborative learning and the prospects for collaborative learning to support teachers' preferences for professional development and the existing culture of learning within schools. This research added to what is already known about the process and culture of learning as well as its potential for being effective professional development for educators in improving literacy learning and literacy teaching practices. Information gained from this research expanded understanding of the limits and benefits of this model of professional development, its potential to raise students' academic achievement, teachers' sense of self-efficacy, and ultimately the professionalization of teaching. This method of shared learning strengthens the concept of democratic schools and democracy in society as proposed by Dewey (1916, 1938).

Summary

Collaborative learning communities in Title 1 schools are possible by understanding teachers' perceptions and perspectives on collaboration. Recognizing the underlying reasons for these perceptions is vital. This knowledge will assist researchers and educators to understand how Title 1 schools can implement and sustain powerful collaborative literacy learning cultures.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to understand the process of collaborative learning among teachers within literacy learning communities. The research centers on the following five research questions:

1. What are the characteristics that define a learning community related to literacy learning and literacy learning leadership in three Title I Schools?
2. What characteristics define collaboration as a learning tool in the learning communities of these Title I Schools?
3. What are teachers’ perceptions of the literacy specialist’s leadership style as it affects collaboration in the schools’ learning communities?
4. How do the teachers’ perceptions of the literacy specialist’s role as literacy learning leader influence the collaborative learning culture in the three schools?
5. What are the teachers’ perceptions of the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader and how do these perceptions influence collaboration in their schools?

Chapter 4 examines perceptions of supports and constraints to interactive learning within collaborative literacy learning communities of three Title I Schools. This chapter also examines the schools’ perceptions of the effects of literacy learning leadership by the literacy specialist and the classroom teacher within these
communities. Chapter 4 summarizes the research findings and provides a description of Chapter 5.

An analysis of the data collected in this research provides the answers to the five research questions. This analysis is based on qualitative methodology (Merriam, 1998). Three major categories emerge from the data analysis: 1) the support of learning interaction within literacy learning communities, 2) the support of the effects of the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader within these collaborative literacy learning communities, and 3) the support of the classroom teacher acting as literacy learning leader within these communities.

Data analyses were conducted across the three Title 1 Schools, "Landmark," "Covey," and "Farsey," to determine support and constraint of the three areas. Analyses of the schools' responses also were conducted to investigate collective and varying responses with regard to these three areas. These investigations were designed to answer the five central questions of this research and to establish how collaboration is viewed on a continuum across the three schools.

Two major themes surround the three categories of this research. These themes 1) involve the schools' perspectives on collaborative literacy learning and 2) reflect the teachers' self perceptions and perceptions of others as learners and learning leaders. Two main strands run through and envelop these two themes: 1) the traditional learning culture of schools and 2) the notion of self-efficacy.
Qualitative Analysis of Data

This section provides the responses of the participants from Landmark, Covey, and Farsey and answers the five research questions.

"1. What are the characteristics that define a learning community related to literacy learning and literacy learning leadership in three Title I Schools?"

In an effort to look at the participants' responses to answer question 1, the following discussion focuses on the support and constraint of collaborative learning among the teachers in these schools. Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 provide details of the participants' responses. Conclusions are drawn from these comments and are further discussed in Chapter 5. Table 4.1 indicates areas of high agreement among the three schools.

Table 4.1 Supportive Characteristics of Collaboration: High Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Perceptions</th>
<th>Landmark</th>
<th>Covey</th>
<th>Farsey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Encourages Need to Learn</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td>X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improves Learning (Vision)</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td>X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supports Non-Threatening Learning Environment</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td>X X X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reciprocity in Learning / Learning Leadership

| • Respects Others' Expertise | X X X | X X X | X X X |
| • Improves Teaching Practices | X X X | X X X | X X X |

80

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Table 4.1 explains high consensus among all schools indicating that collaboration is successful when maintaining positive perceptions of collaboration. These perceptions are supported by maintaining a vision of success in learning within a supportive learning environment. The three schools also believed establishing reciprocity in learning and learning leadership through respect of other collaborators' expertise and the belief in improving teaching practices were necessary to support collaboration. A Landmark participant stated, “Collaboration helps us share what we know about literacy teaching. This is good because our job is to help the kids.” The literacy specialist at Landmark agreed by noting, “Collaboration is important because it gives us the opportunity to share our expertise about literacy. Many hands make light work.” One Covey respondent explained, “Collaboration makes our teaching stronger. Table 4.1 reflects a collaborative learning culture in the three schools. However, examination of the data in Table 4.2 reflects a less positive view.
Table 4.2  Supportive Characteristics of Collaboration: Medium Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Landmark</th>
<th>Covey</th>
<th>Farsey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Sue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Perceptions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Loves Learning</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrates Willingness to Learn</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maintains Focused Direction in Learning</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Admits Successes and Weaknesses</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communicates Effectively</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Displays Flexibility</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exhibits Rapport</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maintains Trust</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers' Autonomy and Self Efficacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supports Self-Confidence</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity in Learning / Learning Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recognizes Others' Importance in Learning</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accepts Help as Support</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Complements Teaching Practices</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Suggests Professional Development</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Medium consensus in Table 4.2 reflects Landmark as highly collaborative, Covey as moderately collaborative, and Farsey as non-collaborative. Landmark recognized the need for professional development and believed effective communication are supportive to collaboration. A Landmark participant stated, “Professional development in literacy is important because we’re always growing as learners.” Covey acknowledged others’ importance in learning as well as accepting help as support and not criticism as important to collaboration. Farsey indicated collaboration complements teachers’ teaching practices, yet these participants refrained from discussing the need for interactive learning. Analyzing the data vertically confirms Landmark’s strong understanding of the characteristics defining a collaborative learning. Covey has a moderate understanding and Farsey reflects a weak understanding. While this table reflects a continuum of collaboration, Table 4.3 provides information that clearly separates the three schools’ perceptions of these support characteristics.
Table 4.3  Supportive Characteristics of Collaboration:  
Low Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Perceptions</th>
<th>Landmark</th>
<th>Covey</th>
<th>Farsey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Recognizes Learning</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shares Same Teaching Philosophies</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Receives Administrators' Guidance</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maintains Close Proximity of Classroom Assignments</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Facilitates Grade Changes</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Compromises</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity in Learning / Learning Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Avoids Trial and Error Learning</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Low consensus in Table 4.3 indicates only Landmark recognized that the need for continued learning supports collaboration. The participants from Covey and Farsey focused on conditions of convenience as supportive to collaboration. These weak characteristics included the avoidance of trial and error learning and close proximity of classrooms. Covey and Farsey ignored the fact that learning is recursive and socially constructed. These beliefs begin to separate Covey and Farsey as less collaborative than Landmark. In Tables 4.2 and 4.3, Landmark steps out as a strong collaborative learning culture. Landmark realized the need and willingness to learn, flexibility, and accepting help as support and not criticism are necessary for collaborative learning. In reviewing these three tables, several characteristics stand out and are more relevant and major in
supporting collaboration than some of the minor supports. These include: 1) the willingness to pursue professional development in literacy, 2) a non-threatening learning environment, 3) communicating with others, 4) respecting the expertise of others, and 5) sharing the same teaching philosophies. In considering these five characteristics, a pattern of strong collaboration in Landmark begins to emerge.

The social process of learning is complex because it has many challenges (Little, 1982). Constraints resulted from threats to self-efficacy in one's craft and the negative influences of the traditional culture of learning. The complaints by Landmark, Covey, and Farsey explained these constraints and are indicated in Table 4.4.
Table 4.4 Constraining Characteristics of Collaborative Learning:
High, Medium, and Low Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Landmark</th>
<th>Covey</th>
<th>Farsey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Sue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Agreement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats to Self-Efficacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Displays Personality Differences</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Agreement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats to Self-Efficacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interprets Others' Statements Negatively</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences of the Traditional Culture of Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prefers Isolation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lacks Time</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Agreement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Perceptions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collaboration Recycles Ideas</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats to Self-Efficacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Needs to Appear Knowledgeable</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maintains No Plan for Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Possesses Know-It-All Attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Experiences Negative Interactions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
High consensus indicates personality differences constrain collaboration. Moderate agreement focused on threats to self-efficacy resulting from negative interpretations of others’ statements and teachers’ preferences for learning in isolation. The area of low agreement begins to reflect Farsey as a non-collaborative learning culture. Farsey indicated the recycling of ideas in collaboration and the lack of time were constraining to collaboration. These perceptions ignore the fact that collaboration involves recycling of ideas because learning is recursive. Although all participants recognized constraints to collaborative learning, Farsey focused on these additional constraints.

The belief in collaboration as a tool to meet teaching needs determines how collaborative learning is used. The next research question focuses on supports and constraints to collaboration as a learning tool.

"2. What characteristics define collaboration as a learning tool in the learning communities of these Title I Schools?"

Collaborative learning cultures in schools strengthen teachers’ literacy teaching practices and improve students’ literacy learning achievement (Fullan, 2001). In an effort to look at the participants’ responses to answer question 2, the following discussion focuses on the use of collaboration to improve literacy teaching in the three schools. Tables 4.5 and 4.6 provide details of the participants’ responses. Conclusions are drawn from these comments and are further discussed in Chapter 5. Table 4.5 indicates the participants’ responses supporting collaboration as a learning tool.
Table 4.5  Use of Collaboration as a Learning Tool: High and Low Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Agreement</th>
<th>Landmark</th>
<th>Covey</th>
<th>Farsey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity in Learning / Learning Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conducts Informally Daily and Weekly</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Periodic Inservices are More Formal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meets Teaching and Learning Needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Incorporates Usual Teaching Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Agreement</th>
<th>Landmark</th>
<th>Covey</th>
<th>Farsey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity in Learning / Learning Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learns by Observing Colleagues</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learns Through Frequent Discussion</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engages in Reflection</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Believes in Importance of Networking with Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accepts that Exchange of Learning and Learning Leadership Roles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Applies New Teaching Practices and Strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Table 4.5 indicates all schools used collaboration as a learning tool to meet their teaching and learning needs. Powerful collaborative learning relies on the following factors: 1) observation, 2) discussion, 3) reflection, 4) accepting and exchanging learning leadership roles, and 5) applying new teaching strategies. A close analysis of the data indicates only Landmark discussed the importance of learning through these methods. A vertical analysis of the data also indicates Landmark is knowledgeable about the importance of networking with peers. One participant stated, “We all need to work as a team.” This data reaffirms Landmark’s highly collaborative learning culture. Although one participant from Covey agreed with Landmark, both Covey and Farsey reflected a weak understanding of how to engage in collaborative learning to improve their literacy learning and teaching. Covey maintains a status of being mildly collaborative, and Farsey continues to exemplify a non-collaborative learning culture. Table 4.5 also indicates only areas of high and low agreement causing an anomaly in the data.

Constraints in using collaboration as a learning tool result from the negative influences of the traditional culture of learning as well as threats to self-efficacy in one’s craft as literacy learner and literacy learning leader (Little, 1982). Table 4.6 reflects such constraints based on the responses of the participants.
Table 4.6  Constraints to Use of Collaboration as a Learning Tool: High, Medium, and Low Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landmark</th>
<th>Covey</th>
<th>Farsey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Sue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>Lucy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Jesse</td>
<td>Lona</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Agreement</th>
<th>Threats to Self-Efficacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fears Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Agreement</th>
<th>Traditional Culture of Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Relies on Classroom Teachers Routine Teaching Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium Agreement</th>
<th>Traditional Culture of Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Imposes Administrative Demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Agreement</th>
<th>Traditional Culture of Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Prefers Passive Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Agreement</th>
<th>Traditional Culture of Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Lacks Communication with Literacy Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Agreement</th>
<th>Enrolls Large Numbers of Students in Classrooms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The areas of medium and low agreement in Table 4.6 revealed Covey and Farsey focused more heavily on constraints to collaboration than Landmark. Examples of Covey’s and Farsey’s complaints were teachers’ preferences for passive learning and crowded classrooms. Significant constraints to collaboration include: 1) the fear of

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
change and 2) the reliance on prior teaching strategies. The data in Table 4.6 reflects Landmark as more realistic about the limits of collaborative learning than Covey and Farsey. In addition, a vertical analysis illustrates Covey and Farsey were more concerned about constraints to the use of collaboration than Landmark.

The literacy specialist also influences teachers' use of collaboration as a learning tool. The literacy specialist is important in strengthening reciprocity in learning and learning leadership in collaborative literacy learning communities (Bean, 2004). Research questions three and four focus on the leadership style and role of the literacy specialist in these communities. The leadership style and role of the literacy specialist play a central role in shaping the collaborative climate of the school.

"3. What are teachers' perceptions of the literacy specialist’s leadership style as it affects collaboration in the schools’ learning communities?"

In an effort to look at the schools’ perceptions to answer question 3, the following discussion focuses on the teachers’ perceptions of the supports and constraints to the literacy specialist’s leadership style affecting collaboration in literacy learning communities. Tables 4.7 and 4.8 provide details of the schools’ responses. Conclusions are drawn from these comments and are further discussed in Chapter 5. Table 4.7 reflects the participants’ responses concerning support of the literacy specialist’s leadership style.
Table 4.7 Support of Teachers' Perceptions of Literacy Specialists' Leadership Style: High, Medium, and Low Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classoom Teachers' Positive Perceptions</th>
<th>Landmark</th>
<th>Covey</th>
<th>Farsey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Sue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts as Literacy Learning Leader</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates Skillfulness as Literacy Learning Leader</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintains Highly Professional Style</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates Knowledge About Literacy</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possesses Personable Leadership Style</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications Effectively</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates Trust</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possesses Favorable Classroom Reputation</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts as Literacy Learner</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates Expertise About Literacy</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possesses Passion for Literacy</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.7  Support of Teachers' Perceptions of Literacy Specialists' Leadership Style: High, Medium, and Low Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Agreement</th>
<th>Landmark</th>
<th>Covey</th>
<th>Farsey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Sue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>Lucy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Jesse</td>
<td>Lona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Acts as a Team worker</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Avoids Collaboration with Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maintains Minimal Presence in Classrooms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• (Classroom Teachers) Expect to View Literacy Specialist's Job Description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7 indicates teachers’ positive perceptions and perspectives of the literacy specialist’s leadership style are supportive to the literacy specialist. Significant characteristics to support the leadership style of the literacy specialist include: 1) acting as a literacy learner and literacy learning leader, 2) maintaining a highly professional leadership style, 3) communicating effectively, 4) demonstrating expertise about literacy, and 5) acting as a team worker in the learning community. The data again suggest a continuum of collaboration. While all schools focused on some of these points, Landmark believed all of these characteristics were necessary to support the literacy specialist. A review of the data reaffirms Landmark as a highly collaborative learning culture. Only Landmark believed the influence of the literacy specialist’s passion for literacy learning, communication, and a teamwork learning effort supports the literacy specialist’s leadership style. Farsey again reflects a non-collaborative learning culture by indicating...
maintaining minimal presence in classrooms and no collaboration with teachers supported the literacy specialist’s leadership style. These actions are more constraining than supportive to powerful collaboration. A vertical analysis of the data reflects Covey’s moderate collaborative nature because Covey did not discuss the need for the literacy specialist to act as a team worker or team learner in the literacy learning community.

The schools’ negative perceptions of the literacy specialist’s leadership style constrain perceptions of this leadership style. Table 4.8 lists the constraints to cause these negative perceptions.
Table 4.8  Teachers' Perceptions of Constraints in the Literacy Specialist Style: High, Medium, and Low Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Landmark</th>
<th>Covey</th>
<th>Farsey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frank Mary Sue</td>
<td>Rose Tina Lucy</td>
<td>Helen Jesse Lona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Agreement</td>
<td>Classroom Teachers' Negative Perceptions</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lacks Professionalism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Agreement</td>
<td>Classroom Teachers' Negative Perceptions</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrates Authoritarian Attitudes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lacks Interest or is Inactive in Learning Leadership Role</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrates Irresponsible Leadership Style</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Agreement</td>
<td>Classroom Teachers' Negative Perceptions</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Criticizes Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maintains Weak Rapport with Teachers</td>
<td>X X X X X X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrates Low Level of Trust</td>
<td>X X X X X X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Possesses an Unsupportive Leadership Style</td>
<td>X X X X X X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Table 4.8 Teachers' Perceptions of Constraints in the Literacy Specialist Style: High, Medium, and Low Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landmark</th>
<th>Covey</th>
<th>Farsey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Sue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low Agreement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrates Little Interest in Literacy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fails to Communicate with Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• (Classroom Teachers) Possess Negative Mindsets</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reflects Poor Reputation as Classroom Teacher</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8 indicates high consensus concerning constraints to the literacy specialist’s leadership style focused on the literacy specialist’s lack of professionalism. Medium consensus indicates an inactive or irresponsible learning leadership style and authoritarian attitudes constrain the literacy specialist. Low consensus reflects the disinterest in literacy learning and a low level of trust constrain the literacy specialist’s learning leadership style. Landmark realized a strong collaborative learning community relies on the supportive and responsible leadership style of the literacy specialist. All Landmark participants agreed the lack of interest and inactivity as learning leader constrain the literacy specialist’s leadership style and the learning community. A vertical analysis of the data in the area of low agreement reflect the fact that Landmark is very knowledgeable about constraints to teachers’ perceptions of the literacy specialist’s
leadership style. Covey is moderately aware of these constraints and Farsey is unaware of most constraints. These levels of awareness are indicative of each school’s understanding of the importance of the role of the literacy specialist in collaborative learning.

The literacy specialist is the catalyst to strengthen reciprocity in learning and learning leadership in collaborative literacy learning communities (Bean, 2004). Question 4 explains the schools’ perceptions of the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader.

“4. How do the teachers’ perceptions of the literacy specialist’s role as literacy learning leader influence the collaborative learning culture in the three schools?”

In an effort to look at the schools’ responses to answer question 4, the following discussion focuses on the supportive and constraining characteristics of the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader within collaborative literacy learning communities. Tables 4.9, 4.10, and 4.11 provide details of the participants’ responses. Conclusions are drawn from these comments and are further discussed in Chapter 5. Table 4.9 indicates high and medium agreement concerning the support of the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Agreement</th>
<th>Landmark</th>
<th>Covey</th>
<th>Farsey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catalyst for Learning and Literacy Learning Leadership</td>
<td>x x x x x x x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrates Literacy Knowledge</td>
<td>x x x x x x x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Agreement</td>
<td>Landmark</td>
<td>Covey</td>
<td>Farsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalyst for Learning and Literacy Learning Leadership</td>
<td>x x x x x x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Models as Active Learner</td>
<td>x x x x x x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Foresees Teachers' Literacy Teaching Problems</td>
<td>x x x x x x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relays Information about Literacy Research and Resources</td>
<td>x x x x x x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strengthens Teachers' Literacy Learning</td>
<td>x x x x x x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Benefits Teachers' Literacy Teaching Practices</td>
<td>x x x x x x x x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.9  Support of Literacy Specialist as Literacy Learning Leader: 
High and Medium Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Landmark</th>
<th>Covey</th>
<th>Farsey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Sue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students in Pull-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out Reading Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in Table 4.9 demonstrate that each school had different expectations of the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader. Landmark considered this role to be shared between the literacy specialist and teachers. These participants explained the literacy specialist was important in strengthening reciprocity in learning and learning leadership. Most participants from Covey and Farsey favored the literacy specialist working in isolation away from the classroom teachers, for example, working with students in pull-out reading groups. While Covey and Farsey considered this role to be supportive to the literacy specialist, working away from teachers constrains the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader. The important supportive characteristics to the role of the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader include: 1) demonstrating literacy knowledge, 2) acting as a co-learner with teachers, 3) informing teachers about literacy research and resources, and 4) encouraging professional development in literacy. A consideration of these factors reaffirms Landmark's highly collaborative culture because

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Landmark recognized the importance of these characteristics. Covey is reaffirmed as mildly collaborative because the Covey participants focused on the literacy specialist in a role that supported a top-down approach to learning. The data again reinforces Farsey’s non-collaborative culture. Farsey not only expressed their disinterest in collaborative learning with the literacy specialist, a vertical analysis of the data reflects Farsey’s weak understanding of supportive factors to the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader. The continuum of collaboration also is reflected in the area of low agreement in Table 4.10.
Table 4.10  \textbf{Support of Literacy Specialist as Literacy Learning Leader: Low Agreement}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Agreement</th>
<th>Landmark</th>
<th>Covey</th>
<th>Farsey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Sue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>Lucy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Jesse</td>
<td>Lona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalyst for Learning and Literacy Learning Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Strengthens Teachers as Literacy Learners and Literacy Learning Leaders</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Acts as a Co-Learner with Teachers about Literacy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provides Teachers with Feedback Regarding Literacy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Receives and Appreciates Teachers' Feedback</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Works with Teachers in Classrooms</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Models One or Two Lessons Per Year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Maintains Follow-Through Regarding Literacy Related Purchase</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Benefits Low Literacy-Achieving Students</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.10 indicates Landmark recognized the literacy specialist as the catalyst to strengthen teachers as literacy learners and literacy learning leaders. Most participants from Landmark agreed the literacy specialist benefits teachers as literacy learners and literacy learning leaders by strengthening teachers as literacy learners and learning leaders, utilizing feedback from teachers, and working with teachers in classrooms. The data from Covey reflects different perspectives. Covey teachers’ belief in a top-down approach to learning portray the literacy specialist emerging as the literacy learning leader and the classroom teachers as passive learning recipients. Farsey’s disinterest in collaboration with the literacy specialist was evident by their suggestions for minimal collaboration with a “hands-off” or cautious approach toward teachers. Farsey’s beliefs about support to the literacy specialist as the literacy learning leader are more constraining than supportive. The data continue to reflect the continuum of collaboration among the three schools by providing clear evidence of Landmark’s highly collaborative nature, Covey’s moderately collaborative environment, and Farsey’s non-collaborative environment.
environment. In addition to these constraints, other constraints to the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader are reflected in Table 4.11 that follows.
| High Agreement |  |  |  |  |
|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Not a Catalyst for Learning and Literacy Learning Leadership | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| • Lacks Professionalism |  |

| Medium Agreement |  |  |  |  |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Not a Catalyst for Learning and Literacy Learning Leadership | X | X | X | X | X |
| • Lacks Literacy Expertise |  |
| • Demonstrates Inactivity in Leadership Role | X | X | X |  |

| Low Agreement |  |  |  |  |
|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Not a Catalyst for Learning and Literacy Learning Leadership | X | X | X |  |
| • Exhibits Disinterest in Literacy and Literacy Learning Leadership |  |
| • Lacks Communication about Literacy Learning | X | X | X |  |
| • Possesses Poor Reputation as Prior Classroom Teacher | X | X |  |
| • Relies Solely on Pull-Out Reading Groups | X | X | X |  |
Table 4.11  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.11  Literacy Specialist's Constraints as Literacy Learning Leader: High, Medium, and Low Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Mary Sue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Agreement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Inhibits Students' Literacy Learning Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers' Negative Perceptions of Literacy Learning Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lacks a Cautious Approach Toward Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medium Agreement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Requires a Support Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Culture of Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Imposes Demands by School Administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low Agreement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Possesses a Broad Job Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prefers Isolation (Teachers)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11 indicates all schools believed that the lack of professionalism constrained the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader. The data clarify that each school focused on particular constraints. Landmark School targeted the literacy specialist’s disinterest in literacy and literacy learning leadership and Covey School focused on the literacy specialist’s lack of literacy expertise. Farsey concentrated on the
lack of communication with classroom teachers about literacy learning. The responses from Landmark, Covey and Farsey participants reaffirm the continuum of collaboration. The major constraints to the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader include: 1) the lack of professionalism and literacy expertise, 2) inactivity in the leadership role, and 3) disinterest in literacy learning and literacy learning leadership. By recognizing all these constraints, Landmark understood the literacy specialist was vital to their collaborative learning community.

The responses from Landmark, Covey and Farsey participants reaffirm the continuum of collaboration. Landmark’s literacy specialist stated, “The literacy specialist must be a professional who is interested in learning about literacy and acting as a leader of learning. The literacy specialist also inspires others to be learners and learning leaders.” Covey’s mild collaborative learning culture was reflected by their literacy specialist’s need for a support group for collaboration. This participant stated, “Many times an in-road or support group is necessary to support collaboration around here.” The beliefs of two Farsey participants strengthen Farsey as a non-collaborative school. In Table 4.7 one teacher represents a contradiction. In Table 4.11 Farsey believed the lack of collaboration about literacy constrained the literacy specialist; however, in Table 4.7 Farsey explained the literacy specialist was supported by not engaging in literacy collaboration with teachers. Farsey’s literacy specialist admitted not acting as a literacy learning leader and not interested in changing her usual practices. In addition, one Farsey teacher’s belief in a cautious approach toward teachers as a support mirrored their disinterest in collaborative learning. These statements reaffirm Farsey’s non-
collaborative learning culture. The areas of high and medium agreement reflect more collective agreement within each school than low agreement.

The classroom teacher as literacy learning leader supports collaborative literacy learning communities (Sweeney, 2003). Research question 5 explains the schools' perceptions of the classroom teacher as learning leader influence the schools' collaborative learning environment.

“5. What are the teachers' perceptions of the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader and how do these perceptions influence collaboration in their schools?”

In an effort to look at the participants' responses to answer question 5, the following discussion focuses on the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader. Tables 4.12, 4.13, and 4.14 contain the data of the participants' responses. Conclusions are drawn from these data and are further discussed in Chapter 5. Table 4.12 indicates areas of high agreement and medium agreement concerning support to the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader in Title 1 Schools. Table 4.13 explains the area of low agreement.
Table 4.12  Support of Classroom Teacher as Literacy Learning Leader: High and Medium Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Agreement</th>
<th>Landmark</th>
<th>Covey</th>
<th>Farsey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Sue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>Lucy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Jesse</td>
<td>Lona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates Willingness to Assume Literacy Learning Leadership Role</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts as a Literacy Learning Leader on the Side</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates Knowledge about Literacy Learning and Teaching</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implements and Aligns New Learning in Literacy Teaching Practices</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is an Experienced and Effective Classroom Teacher</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possesses a Positive Attitude</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps to Develop Reciprocity in Learning and Learning Leadership</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High agreement in Table 4.12 indicates all participants agreed the classroom teacher is supported as literacy learning leader through the willingness to accept this role. Medium agreement reflects the fact that Landmark and Covey believed the classroom teacher is supported by efforts to develop reciprocity in learning and learning leadership.
also are supportive. Farsey did not agree with this point. In addition, a vertical analysis of the data reflects Farsey’s lack of understanding of supportive factors to classroom teachers as literacy learning leaders. Although Table 4.12 confirms Farsey’s non-collaborative learning environment, this table is not strongly reflective of the continuum of collaboration. However, low agreement in Table 4.13 is reflective of the continuum with Landmark as highly collaborative, Covey as mildly collaborative, and Farsey as non-collaborative. Table 4.13 reflects low agreement.
Table 4.13  Support of Classroom Teacher as Literacy Learning Leader:
Low Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landmark</th>
<th>Covey</th>
<th>Farsey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Sue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Possesses a Positive Self-Concept as Learner and Learning Leader**: X X X
- **Acts as a Visible Leader**: X X X
- **Possesses Approachable Behavior**: X X X
- **Maintains Good Rapport with Others**: X X
- **Models Strategic Planning**: X X
- **Demonstrates Innovative Literacy Teaching Strategies**: X X
- **Models Interest in Professional Development**: X X X
- **Is an Active Co-Learner**: X X X
- **Inservices Teachers**: X X X
- **Maintains Strong Beliefs about Literacy Catalyst for Learning and Literacy Learning Leadership**: X X X
- **Believes in Literacy Learning Leadership by Individual**: X X
Table 4.13 indicates that each school believed the classroom teacher was supported as literacy learning leader for different reasons. Landmark focused on acting as a learner and learning leader among colleagues to benefit and strengthen the literacy learning community. Covey demonstrated the need to support self-efficacy by having good rapport with colleagues and by being strategic in planning inservices for teachers. Farsey focused on external motivation such as pursuing career plans and desiring notoriety. Table 4.13 demonstrates Landmark realized the importance of supporting reciprocity in learning and learning leadership in a learning community. While Covey continued to view the role of learning leadership as a top-down approach, Farsey focused on accepting learning leadership roles for self-serving reasons. The major supportive characteristics to the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader in Tables 4.12 and 4.13
include: 1) the willingness to assume learning leadership roles, 2) possessing knowledge about literacy, 3) implementing and aligning new learning in literacy teaching practices, 4) developing reciprocity in learning and learning leadership, and 5) modeling the interest in professional development in literacy. Landmark recognized all these factors as supportive to the classroom teacher learning leader. Covey did not indicate that the interest in professional development was important. Farsey focused on the willingness to assume learning leadership roles for external reasons such as notoriety and dysfunctionalism. In consideration of the data, the continuum of collaboration among the three schools is again reflected.

Constraints to the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader among their peers within collaborative literacy learning communities discourage classroom teachers from assuming these roles. These constraints result from threats to self-efficacy and negative influences of the traditional culture of learning (Barth, 1990). Table 4.14 lists these constraints.
Table 4.14  Classroom Teachers' Constraints as Literacy Learning Leaders: Medium and Low Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threats to Self-Efficacy</th>
<th>Medium Agreement</th>
<th>Low Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Classroom Teachers) Possess Conflicting Personalities</td>
<td>X X X X X X X X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacks Knowledge about Literacy</td>
<td>X X X X X X X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possesses Persistent Attitudes</td>
<td></td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticizes Other Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacks Self-Confidence</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatened by Other Teachers' &quot;I Know-It-All&quot; Attitudes</td>
<td></td>
<td>X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Culture of Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td>X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoids Literacy Learning Leadership Responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conforms as Follower Not Leader</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacks &quot;Expert&quot; Label</td>
<td></td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefers Isolation</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacks Time</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Landmark | Covey | Farsey
---|---|---
Frank Mary Sue | Rose Tina Lucy | Helen Jesse Lona
The data in Table 4.14 do not indicate high consensus or collective agreement from each school on any constraints to classroom teachers' literacy learning leadership roles. Medium consensus focuses on teachers’ threats to self-efficacy in their craft resulting from personality clashes and teachers’ lack of knowledge about literacy learning and teaching. Low agreement is significant because this area indicates threats to self-efficacy and the influences of the traditional culture of learning constrain classroom teachers learning leadership roles in Title 1 Schools. These constraints included the lack of self-confidence and preferences to conform as followers and not as leaders.

Table 4.14 reveals extremes in the data. Landmark reflected collective agreement in many categories such as personality clashes, lacking self-confidence, preferences for isolation, and the lack of time. Covey expressed moderate agreement. This school explained teachers’ avoidance of learning leadership responsibilities and teachers’ preferences for conformity as followers constrain teachers’ learning leadership roles. Farsey School had very little, if any, agreement. Some participants at Farsey agreed teachers’ lack of the “expert” label constrained these roles.

Important constraining factors to the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader include: 1) teachers’ personality clashes, 2) the lack of literacy knowledge, 3) the lack of self-confidence, 4) teachers’ preferences for isolation, and 5) the lack of time. The data indicate that Landmark possessed an understanding of the factors that interfere with the success of teachers’ learning leadership roles. Covey exhibited a weak understanding and Farsey demonstrated no understanding of constraining factors to classroom teachers’ learning leadership roles. Farsey’s lack of understanding of these factors was indicated by a horizontal and vertical examination of the data. Literacy learning communities
cannot be effective when the balance of reciprocity in learning and learning leadership is threatened by a weak understanding of the importance of teachers’ learning leadership roles (Rosenholtz, 1991). Consideration of the data confirms Landmark as a highly collaborative learning culture, Covey as a moderately collaborative learning culture, and Farsey as a non-collaborative literacy learning culture.

The following section discusses the key points made throughout this chapter. The discussion focuses on the influences of collaborative learning communities and the traditional culture of learning on teachers’ literacy learning and literacy teaching practices. The summary also previews the discussion in Chapter 5.

Summary

Many learning theorists agree learning is a social process because people learn within a socially constructed context (Dewey, 1916, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978). Improving schools from within is possible through effective learning communities because students’ literacy learning improves when teaching practices are strengthened. These conditions contribute to classroom teachers’ self-efficacy in their craft as literacy learners and literacy learning leaders (Rosenholtz, 1991).

A continuum of collaboration among the three schools was evident throughout the data. Landmark is highly collaborative because it expressed an understanding of ways to maintain a collaborative learning culture in their school. Landmark realized collaborative learning communities become effective by maintaining a vision of learning through a teamwork effort in learning and through the acceptance of responsibilities to support reciprocity in learning and learning leadership. Landmark’s teachers acted as learners...
and learning leaders through extended professional development and frequent dialogue with colleagues.

Covey reflects a moderately collaborative learning culture because this school had a weak understanding that networking with colleagues and seeking professional development in literacy are necessary to support collaborative literacy learning communities. Farsey exhibits a non-collaborative learning culture. Although this school indicated collaboration in a supportive learning environment improves literacy learning and teaching, the participants did not recognize the need to learn with colleagues. Most participants did not view professional development as important to their learning or a community of learners.

The continuum of collaboration also is reflected through the schools' beliefs about the role of literacy learning leadership. The literacy specialist is the catalyst strengthening the learning community as powerful literacy learners and literacy learning leaders (Lyons and Pinnell, 2001). Powerful learners become effective learning leaders and effective learning leaders become powerful learners (Wasley, 1991). Landmark recognized the importance of the literacy specialist as the central force in their learning community by setting the example of literacy learner and literacy learning leader. These actions encourage classroom teachers to accept these roles to strengthen reciprocity in learning and learning leadership. The participants at Landmark realized the exchange of these roles is possible through effective feedback between the literacy specialist and classroom teachers.

Covey responded with a weak understanding of the importance of literacy learning leadership and how this leadership supports reciprocity in learning and learning
leadership. Most Covey participants recognized the literacy specialist as the literacy learning leader and classroom teachers as passive learning recipients. Although these participants viewed the literacy specialist as a co-learner, none of these participants understood that the literacy specialist strengthens the entire community as learners and learning leaders. In addition, these Covey respondents were concerned with constraints to teachers’ literacy learning leadership roles due to criticism and the need to conform as followers and not leaders.

The noncollaborative model established by Farsey ignores reciprocity in learning and learning leadership and is nonexistent in their non-collaborative learning culture. Farsey did not support the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader and viewed this leadership as an obstacle for teachers. These participants did not favor interactive learning and preferred to rely on their classroom teaching experience. Since Farsey did not value collaborative learning, these participants believed classroom teachers accepted literacy learning leadership roles for self-serving reasons and not to support learning or learning leadership.

The discussion of these three schools and the models of their collaborative learning cultures are expanded in Chapter 5. The five research questions of this study are used as a framework for the discussion in Chapter 5. This chapter begins with a brief statement about the purpose of this study and discusses the participants’ responses to each of the five research questions. Particular attention is paid to answering each of these questions. This discussion focuses on the influences of collaborative literacy learning communities and the traditional culture of learning in schools on teaching practices. Conclusions and recommendations are made and are based on the implications provided.
by these data. These conclusions and recommendations are tied to school reform efforts. Reference to research supports this discussion. Recommendations for further study also are made and focus on strengthening collaborative literacy learning and literacy learning leadership efforts in schools. Chapter 5 concludes with a strong statement of affirmation about the importance of this research and how the models of the three schools lead to positive change to establish collaborative learning cultures in schools.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the supports and constraints to collaborative literacy learning communities in three Title I Schools. Chapter 5 addresses each of the five focus questions of this research. Particular attention is paid to answer each question. References to research are used as support for this discussion. The five focus questions of this study are:

1. What are the characteristics that define a learning community related to literacy learning and literacy learning leadership in three Title I Schools?

2. What characteristics define collaboration as a learning tool in the learning communities of these Title I Schools?

3. What are teachers’ perceptions of the literacy specialist’s leadership style as it affects collaboration in the schools’ learning communities?

4. How do the teachers’ perceptions of the literacy specialist’s role as literacy learning leader influence the collaborative learning culture in the three schools?

5. What are the teachers’ perceptions of the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader and how do these perceptions influence collaboration in their schools?
The first question, “What are the characteristics that define a learning community related to literacy learning and literacy learning leadership in three Title I Schools?” focused specifically on the characteristics that define a learning community. Positive perceptions of collaboration support collaborative learning. These perceptions included: a) the need and willingness to learn, b) maintaining a vision of learning success, c) a supportive learning environment, d) respect of others' expertise, and e) communication.

Obstacles to collaborative learning are reflected, in part, in data that indicate negative perceptions of collaborative learning that, in turn, constrain collaboration. The data indicated negative perceptions of collaborative learning constrain collaboration. Negative characteristics that interfered with collaborative learning resulted from a) personality differences, b) negative interpretations of others' statements, c) preferences for learning in isolation, d) the lack of time, and e) recycled ideas.

The next question, “What characteristics define collaboration as a learning tool in the learning communities of these Title I Schools?” was asked to determine how collaboration was used in the literacy learning community of each school. The results of the research indicated all participants used collaboration about literacy as a learning tool because collaborative learning met their teaching and learning needs. Closer examination of these data, however, yielded different results that will be explained in the discussion section of Chapter 5. Landmark, Covey, and Farsey agreed fear of change and a reliance on patterns of conservative thinking constrained the use of collaboration as a learning tool. Additional constraints included: a) administrators' imposed demands and b) teachers' preferences for passive learning.
In an effort to continue to understand the complexities of collaborative learning and how literacy learning leaders shape perceptions of collaboration, question 3 asked, "What are teachers’ perceptions of the literacy specialist’s leadership style as it affects collaboration in the schools’ learning communities?" Teachers’ perceptions of the literacy specialist’s learning leadership style influence the school’s collaborative learning culture. The schools, identified as “Landmark”, “Covey”, and “Farsey” indicated the following supportive factors of this leadership style: a) acting and demonstrating skillfulness as a literacy learning leader, b) maintaining a highly professional and personable leadership style, and c) demonstrating knowledge about literacy. The constraints to this leadership style included: a) the literacy specialist’s lack of professionalism, b) authoritarian attitudes, and c) inactivity as literacy learning leader.

The literacy specialist has an important role as literacy learning leader (Bean, 2001, 2004). Question 4 was asked to understand how teachers’ perceptions of the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader influence the collaborative learning culture in their school. The fourth question asked, “How do the teachers’ perceptions of the literacy specialist’s role as literacy learning leader influence the collaborative learning culture in the three schools?” The data indicated Landmark, Covey, and Farsey agreed the literacy specialist is supported as learning leader by the following: a) demonstrating literacy knowledge, b) modeling as an active learner, c) relaying information about literacy research and resources, and d) working with students in pull-out reading groups. The three schools indicated the constraints to this learning leadership included: a) exhibiting a lack of professionalism, b) possessing a poor prior reputation as a classroom teacher, and c) teachers’ preferences for learning in isolation. In addition to the literacy
specialist as learning leader, the classroom teachers also is important as a literacy learning leader within the literacy learning community (Wasley, 1991). Question 5 examined how the teachers' perceptions of the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader influenced their school's collaborative literacy learning community.

The fifth question asked, "What are the teachers' perceptions of the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader and how do these perceptions influence collaboration in their literacy learning community? All schools believed the willingness to accept the role of literacy learning leader was vital for the support of the classroom teacher as learning leader. Additional supportive factors included: a) acting as a literacy learning leader on the side, b) possessing knowledge about literacy, c) implementing and aligning new learning in literacy teaching practices, and d) helping to develop reciprocity in learning and learning leadership. The data reflected constraints of teachers' literacy learning leadership roles resulted from the following: a) personality clashes among colleagues, b) the lack of literacy knowledge, c) criticism, d) conformity as follower and not leader, and g) preferences for learning in isolation.

Analysis of the responses to these five questions indicated positive influences of collaborative learning cultures and support to one's self-efficacy as literacy learners and literacy learning leaders support collaborative literacy learning communities. Negative influences of the traditional culture of learning in schools and threats to self-efficacy in one's craft are constraints in these communities. The data reflect a continuum of collaboration across the three schools as a result of these influences. Each school typified a distinct collaborative learning culture. Landmark exhibited a highly collaborative literacy learning culture, Covey reflected a moderately collaborative culture, and Farsey
demonstrated a non-collaborative learning culture. The following section discusses the collaborative learning culture in each school.

Discussion of Results

In this discussion, the tables in Chapter 4 serve as the evidence for the judgments made. These points are supported by the teachers and literacy specialists as they shared common experiences and in areas where they held differing views.

1. What are the characteristics that define a learning community related to literacy learning and literacy learning leadership in three Title I Schools?

The characteristics defining the learning communities in the three schools included: a) a shared vision of learning success for teachers and students, b) reciprocity in learning and learning leadership, and c) a non-threatening learning environment. The data is reinforced by the evidence of high agreement in Table 4.1, medium agreement in Table 4.2, and low agreement in Table 4.3 in Chapter 4.

Shared Vision of Learning Success

A shared vision of learning success relies on the joint agency of all school staff members as well as initiatives to fashion collaborative efforts to honor and foster multiple perspectives (Lyons and Pinnell, 2001). Students’ growth in literacy learning and teachers’ improvement in literacy learning and teaching are supported by sharing in a vision of learning improvement. The data explains the three schools indicated a vision of effective learning communities was supported by a positive approach and the willingness to collaborate. Landmark’s engagement in interactive learning supported their vision as well as their collaborative learning culture. A Landmark participant stated, “If learning is
good, it excites and reenergizes people to share information with others as well as try new ideas.” Although Covey recognized the importance of others in learning and stated that collaboration improves teaching strategies, this school relied on their literacy knowledge, teaching experiences, and routine teaching methods. However, this school believed interactive learning involved a top-down approach in learning with the literacy specialist as learning leader and the teachers as passive recipients. The data reflected Covey as a moderately collaborative learning culture. Farsey clearly reflected a non-collaborative learning culture by expressing disinterest in collaborative learning. This school relied on routine teaching methods and teaching experiences. A Farsey participant stated, “Why do we have to collaborate? Why waste time? All we need to do is rely on what’s worked for us before.” Covey and Farsey indicated, however, the willingness to help other teachers.

The Reciprocity of Learning and Learning Leadership

Learning is a social process (Dewey, 1916, 1938). Reciprocity in learning and learning leadership is strengthened when recognizing other learners as important in the learning community. Landmark believed, “One person’s strength is another’s weakness.” Learners become leaders and leaders become learners (Barth, 1990). The data explain acting as active learners and learning leaders, communicating, exhibiting trust and rapport support reciprocity and teachers’ self-efficacy as learners and learning leaders. Landmark realized reciprocity in learning was supported by the exchange of learning and learning leadership roles by the literacy specialist and the classroom teachers. This belief supports their interest in collaborative learning. Covey was cautious about assuming the
role as learner and disregarded the learning leadership role. Farsey was disinterested in either role.

A Supportive Learning Environment

Dewey (1916, 1938) and Vygotsky (1978) believed a supportive learning environment is essential for growth in learning. The schools indicated a non-threatening learning context is a democratic learning context because it provides opportunities to admit successes and weaknesses, communicate effectively, accept help as support and not criticism, and make suggestions for professional development. Covey explained, “A learning community is the place where you can feel confident to go back and ask the same question a second time and not feel embarrassed because no one will put you down.” Although Covey realized collaborative learning is supportive to one’s self-efficacy in their craft, this school did not engage in collaboration. Landmark realized the efforts to maintain a supportive learning environment supported their learning community by strengthening all members as learners and learning leaders. Covey, however, was preoccupied with the constraints to collaboration resulting from the threats of a non-supportive learning context. Farsey did not elaborate on constraints to collaboration since this school did not support collaborative learning. The data reaffirm Landmark’s highly collaborative learning culture and Farsey’s non-collaborative culture.

In addition to a review of the characteristics that define the learning communities in these schools, the data reveal a number of characteristics that interfered with or constrained these learning communities. Landmark, Covey, and Farsey explained collaborative learning was constrained by a) threats to teachers’ self-efficacy as literacy learners and literacy teachers, b) negative perceptions of collaboration, and c) the
traditional culture of learning. The data is reinforced by the evidence of high agreement, medium agreement, and low agreement in Table 4.4 in Chapter 4.

Threats to Teachers' Self-Efficacy as Literacy Learners and Literacy Teachers

The data reflect the schools' collaborative learning cultures were constrained by personality clashes, disorganization in learning, and the need to appear knowledgeable. Landmark stated, "People don't like to hear they're not effective in what they do." This school recognized the fact that constraints to collaboration exist. However, Landmark did not allow these constraints to interfere with their collaborative learning. The data gives evidence to Landmark's collaborative learning community. Covey was preoccupied with threats to self-efficacy as constraining to collaboration. These threats strengthened Farsey's disinterest in collaboration.

Negative Perceptions of Collaboration

Teachers' negative perceptions of collaboration also constrained collaborative learning communities. Farsey explained collaboration is not effective when ideas are recycled. A participant stated, "Off the bat I know many ideas do not work because I've already seen those kinds of things fail in my classroom." These beliefs ignore the recursive nature of learning and reaffirm the absence of a collaborative learning community in this school.

Influences of the Traditional Culture of Learning

The data indicates Landmark, Covey, and Farsey agreed conservative thinking, learning in isolation, the lack of time, and the top-down control of learning in schools constrain collaboration. These factors are characteristic of the traditional culture of learning. This culture discourages collaborative learning (Fullan, 2001).
directives from administrators leave little time and room for teachers' collaborative input. Although Landmark acknowledged the lack of time as constraining to collaborative learning, these teachers collaborated either during or after school hours. Their efforts reflected their determination to strengthen their learning community. Covey and Farsey concentrated heavily on these constraints.

2. What characteristics define collaboration as a learning tool in the learning communities of these Title I Schools?

The data reveals the three schools believe collaborative learning about literacy improves teaching and learning needs. Landmark, Covey, and Farsey also believed incorporating routine teaching strategies supported their literacy teaching. Landmark depended on a teamwork learning effort by networking with colleagues through observation, frequent discussion, and reflection. This school implemented and aligned new learning into their literacy teaching. Landmark also believed in exchanging learning and learning leadership roles to strengthen their learning community. The data clearly reflects Landmark's collaborative learning nature. Covey, however, demonstrated more of a conservative approach to collaborative learning since this school was hesitant to upset their usual teaching practices. This school needed the assurance that new teaching strategies would be successful since they did not express interest in implementing and aligning new ideas. Covey did not view change in their teaching as a journey in learning. This school believed change was radical. Since Covey was moderately collaborative, these teachers hesitated to depend on collaboration as a learning tool. Farsey did not believe their teaching needed to be changed or improved since they were confident about their teaching beliefs and methods. Since Farsey was non-collaborative, this school had
no understanding of how to implement a collaborative learning community. These facts again support Farsey’s non-collaborative learning culture. These points are reinforced by the evidence of high agreement, medium agreement, and low agreement in Table 4.5 in Chapter 4.

In addition to a review of the ways in which the schools’ use of collaboration as a learning tool defined their learning communities, the data reveal a number of constraining characteristics that define their learning culture. The constraints to collaboration as a learning tool were caused by a) threats to teachers’ self-efficacy, b) teachers’ negative perceptions, and c) the influences of the traditional culture of learning. These points are reinforced by the evidence of high agreement, medium agreement, and low agreement in Table 4.6 in Chapter 4.

Threats to Self-Efficacy

Teachers need to have a sense of self-efficacy in their craft as literacy learners and literacy learning leaders (Rosenholtz, 1991). The data explain the schools’ fear of change upset their self-efficacy because their autonomy as learners and learning leaders was threatened. However, Landmark’s reliance on the literacy expertise of their literacy specialist cushioned the threats to their self-efficacy. Covey ignored their literacy specialist’s expertise and preferred to rely on routine teaching practices. Additionally, Covey did not express interest in implementing and aligning new ideas into their teaching practices. Since these teachers hesitated to depend on collaboration as a learning tool, Covey reaffirmed its moderately collaborative learning culture. Farsey’s strict reliance on learning in isolation away from colleagues shielded them from threats to their self-efficacy in their craft.
The Traditional Culture of Learning in Schools

The traditional culture of learning in schools constrains collaborative literacy learning. Preferences to rely on passive learning and the top-down control of education are characteristic of the school’s traditional culture of learning (Lieberman, 1986). Landmark, Covey, and Farsey acknowledged these constraints. Although Landmark realized these constraints existed, this school also realized the importance of shared learning with colleagues. This school focused on welcoming newcomers to their learning community. Only Landmark realized collaborative learning is important regardless of its constraints. Landmark strived to maintain its collaborative learning culture. One participant stated, “Never give up on people. You never know, one day you might find someone who is interested in learning.”

3. What are teachers’ perceptions of the literacy specialist’s leadership style as it affects collaboration in the schools’ learning communities?

The literacy specialist’s learning leadership style is supported by classroom teachers’ positive perceptions of literacy learning leadership. The following points are reinforced by the evidence of high agreement, medium agreement, and low agreement in Table 4.7 in Chapter 4.

Positive Perceptions

The literacy specialist is the central force in the learning community by supporting the reciprocity between learning and learning leadership (Bean, 2004). The data explains teachers’ positive perceptions of the learning leadership style of the literacy specialist are supported by the literacy specialist’s actions as literacy learner and literacy learning leader. These actions included demonstrating literacy knowledge and skill as a

129
learning leader as well as acting as an active literacy learner and team worker in the learning community. Landmark recognized the importance of the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader, mentor, and co-learner in the community. These beliefs reinforced their highly collaborative learning culture. Although Covey recognized the expertise of their literacy specialist, this school disregarded the collaborative efforts of the literacy specialist. Farsey reaffirmed their non-collaborative learning culture as well as their disrespect of their literacy specialist by favoring minimal learning interaction and a cautious or hands-off attitude toward teachers.

The data also reveal teachers' negative perceptions of the literacy specialist's leadership style constrain their literacy learning communities. All schools agreed that classroom teachers' negative perceptions of literacy learning leadership are constraints to collaboration in the learning community. The following points are reinforced by the evidence of high agreement, medium agreement, and low agreement in Table 4.8 in Chapter 4.

Negative Perceptions

Teachers' negative perceptions of this leadership style result from the literacy specialist's disinterest or inactivity in learning leadership, authoritarian attitudes, and a poor prior reputation as a classroom teacher. Landmark believed teachers' negative perceptions of the literacy specialist were undeserved. However, Covey and Farsey believed these perceptions could easily be justified. As opposed to Landmark, Covey rarely collaborated with the literacy specialist and disregarded the learning leadership efforts of their literacy specialist. Since Farsey was not interested in collaboration, this school favored isolated learning behind closed doors.
4. How do the teachers’ perceptions of the literacy specialist’s role as literacy learning leader influence the collaborative learning culture in the three schools?

All participants agreed the literacy specialist is supported as literacy learning leader by acting as a catalyst for literacy learning and literacy learning leadership. This statement is reinforced by the evidence of high and medium agreement in Table 4.9 and low agreement in Table 4.10 in Chapter 4.

Catalyst for Learning and Learning Leadership

The literacy specialist must be a life-long learner to be effective in the role as literacy learning leader in schools (Bean, 2004). The literacy specialist acts as the catalyst in the literacy learning community by strengthening learning and learning leadership roles. A cyclical pattern of learning reciprocity existed between the literacy specialist and the classroom teachers. The literacy specialist was supported as learning leader by strengthening teachers as literacy learners and literacy learning leaders through a teamwork learning effort. Collaborative feedback between the literacy specialist and classroom teachers strengthened the literacy specialist in this role. Landmark had a strongly collaborative culture because this school realized the literacy specialist and classroom teachers relied on each other to strengthen their learning community. A Landmark participant stated, “Sue has inspired me to become a learning leader for my peers. However, my feedback has helped Sue become a stronger learning leader. Landmark realized the importance of a networking approach to learning as a team.

Covey considered their literacy specialist as the school’s literacy learning leader in name only. This school did not recognize the importance of the literacy specialist as supportive to the exchange of learning and learning leadership roles. Covey’s literacy
specialist focused on needing a thick skin to face teachers' disinterest in collaborative learning. These beliefs reaffirm Covey's mildly collaborative learning culture. Farsey again reflected its non-collaborative culture because this school believed the literacy specialist should not interfere with classroom teachers.

In addition to a review of the supportive characteristics of the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader, this research revealed a number of characteristics that interfere with or constrain this literacy leader within collaborative literacy learning communities. The constraints of the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader result from a) not acting as a catalyst for learning and learning leadership, and b) teachers' negative perceptions of literacy learning leadership, and c) influences of the traditional culture of learning. The following discussion is reinforced by the evidence of high agreement, medium agreement, and low agreement in Table 4.11 in Chapter 4.

Not Acting as a Learning and Learning Leadership Catalyst

The literacy specialist is the literacy learning leader, mentor, and coach to the literacy learning community (Lyons and Pinnell, 2001). The lack of literacy expertise and inactivity in the learning leadership role prevent the literacy specialist from being the catalyst in the learning community. Landmark reaffirmed its strongly collaborative learning culture by recognizing the important role of the literacy specialist as supportive to reciprocity in learning and learning leadership.

Teachers' Negative Perceptions of Literacy Learning Leadership

Farsey School believed not having a cautious approach with a hands-off attitude toward teachers constrained the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader. These
beliefs reaffirmed Farsey as a non-collaborative learning culture by disregarding the role of learning leadership.

Influences of the Traditional Culture of Learning

The traditional culture of learning in schools is characterized by a top-down control of learning and preferences to learn in isolation (Fullan, 2001). Covey explained the imposition of additional duties on the literacy specialist by school administrators and the literacy specialist’s broad and unclear job description cause the literacy specialist to appear unimportant among colleagues. Covey’s and Farsey’s beliefs about collaborative learning with the literacy specialist are reflective of the school’s traditional culture of learning. Both Covey and Farsey did not acknowledge the importance of collaboration about literacy with the literacy specialist. Covey perceived collaboration with the literacy specialist to be a top-down approach to learning with the literacy specialist as the learning leader and the classroom teachers as followers. Farsey favored learning in isolation and focused on avoiding interactive learning.

5. What are the teachers’ perceptions of the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader and how do these perceptions influence collaboration in their schools?

Classroom teachers’ learning leadership roles are necessary to improve schools and meet school reform demands (Wasley, 1991). Classroom teachers are supported as literacy learning leaders among their peers by a) the willingness to be a catalyst for literacy learning and literacy learning leadership and b) external motivations. These points are reinforced by the evidence of high agreement and medium agreement in Table 4.12 and low agreement in Table 4.13 in Chapter 4.

Catalyst for Literacy Learning and Literacy Learning Leadership
Teachers are supported in their roles as learning leaders by the willingness to assume these roles and the interest in professional development. Landmark considered learning leadership to be an individual and group effort. However, Covey and Farsey acknowledge learning leadership as individual efforts. In addition, Covey viewed these roles as top-down efforts. Landmark realized teachers’ learning leadership supported their learning community. A Landmark participant stated, “We get stronger as a learning community by sharing what we know and by teaching each other.” This statement reaffirmed their highly collaborative learning culture. Since Landmark recognized the importance of a team effort in learning, an appropriate metaphor for this school is “teamwork all around.”

External Motivation

Farsey disregarded the important role of the classroom teacher in the learning community by criticizing teachers for accepting learning leadership roles. A Farsey participant described classroom teacher learning leaders as being very obvious and “show-off-y” in front of their peers. These attitudes reaffirm Farsey as a non-collaborative learning community due to their disinterest in collaboration and their ignorance of collaborative learning with colleagues. In addition to a review of the supportive characteristics of the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader among peers, this research revealed a number of characteristics that interfere with or constrain the classroom teacher in this role. Classroom teachers refrain from accepting literacy learning leadership roles due to a) threats to self-efficacy and b) the traditional culture of learning. These points are reinforced by the evidence of high agreement, medium agreement, and low agreement in Table 4.14 in Chapter 4.
Threats to Self-Efficacy

Threats to self-efficacy in one's craft discourage teachers from assuming learning leadership roles. Covey strongly focused on these threats as constraints. A Covey participant noted, “It’s hard to act as a learning leader when teachers always criticize what you say. It’s hard to deal with that.” Since Covey viewed literacy learning leadership as the job of the literacy specialist, teachers did not encourage or support each other as learning leaders. Based on the school’s weak understanding of powerful collaboration and its constrained efforts to support an effective collaborative learning environment, the data clearly reflect Covey as moderately collaborative. A metaphor of “wishful thinking” is appropriate for this school.

The Traditional Culture of Learning

Negative influences of the school’s traditional culture of learning constraining these roles include preferences for learning in isolation, and the lack of time. These constraints restrict teachers’ constructive dialogue about their craft (Little, 1982). Covey and Farsey believed classroom teachers needed to conform as followers and not leaders of learning due to the absence of the “expert” label. A Farsey respondent stated, “I don’t see myself as a leader. I see myself as a follower.” These beliefs contributed to Farsey’s non-collaborative learning culture and strongly reflected it as a non-collaborative learning culture. Not only was Farsey disinterested in collaboration, this school did not know how to establish or maintain a learning culture. Farsey also did not recognize the importance of the literacy specialist in learning communities and viewed classroom teachers’ learning leadership roles with criticism and mockery. A justifiable metaphor for Farsey is “a deserted island.”
Importance to Research

A powerful collaborative learning culture requires social engagement in learning (Dewey, 1916, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978). Collaboration emphasizes the recognition of the literacy specialist and classroom teachers as learners and learning leaders of the learning community. Collaborative literacy learning communities have been heralded as necessary for school improvement (Wepner, Strickland, and Feeley, 2002). However, based on the data, the future of collaborative literacy learning communities seems to be in question.

Landmark exhibited a highly collaborative literacy learning culture. Covey demonstrated a moderately collaborative culture, and Farsey reflected a non-collaborative culture of learning. Although Landmark recognized constraints to collaboration exist, this school’s passion for literacy learning far outweighed these constraints. Covey and Farsey, however, focused on the interwoven complications to collaboration. Although Covey focused on complications from the school’s traditional culture of learning, this school particularly concentrated on threats to self-efficacy. Farsey’s lack of interest in collaboration erased any desire to learn how to become a collaborative learning community. The task of changing a school’s traditional culture of learning into a collaborative culture is complex due to a tapestry of these negative influences. In addition, change is unique to each school and no successful blueprint for change exists (Fullan, 2001, Lieberman, 1986). The following section makes implications about the need for collaborative literacy learning communities in Title 1 Schools.
Implications

The implications from this research for Title 1 Schools are clear. The continuum of collaboration in the data provides a model for success and failure of collaborative literacy learning communities in Title 1 schools. Title 1 schools should review the three models of learning communities provided by Landmark, Covey, and Farsey to understand the supportive and constraining factors in establishing and maintaining collaborative literacy learning communities. The need for qualified literacy specialists to support collaborative literacy learning and literacy learning leadership in schools is evident. A plan for powerful collaboration between the literacy specialist and classroom teachers to support reciprocity in learning and learning leadership also is essential. Theoretically speaking, these implications make sense. The following sections make conclusions based on the evidence in the research findings.

Conclusions

This section provides research-based conclusions that serve as the principles underpinning this research study. The statements summarize the perceptions and perspectives of three Title 1 Schools concerning collaborative literacy learning communities. These conclusions encompass the schools’ teachers’ views on collaborative literacy learning among colleagues, the effects of the literacy specialist as literacy learning leader, and the support of the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader within collaborative literacy learning communities.

1) A vision of learning improvement and support of reciprocity in learning and learning leadership strengthen collaborative literacy learning communities. This vision is
important because it is composed of the guiding principles and beliefs learners hold to be important to the success in students’ learning and teachers’ literacy learning and literacy teaching practices. A vision of powerful learning serves to strengthen the learning community by keeping collaborators focused to the task of learning and learning leadership. DuFour and Eaker (1998) explained a vision “...instills an organization with a sense of direction” (p. 62). Supporting a vision of learning improvement is critical since the bureaucratic control in schools has seemed unable to raise students’ reading test scores and, as a result, has been unable to narrow the literacy achievement gap between students. In consideration of this point and the history of school reform initiatives, school reform measures, incorporating bureaucratic control of schools, will continue. This research has indicated the top-down control of schools has discouraged collaborative literacy learning cultures in Title 1 schools.

2) A supportive learning environment and organization in learning strengthen teachers’ sense of self-efficacy as literacy learners and literacy learning leaders. Dewey (1916, 1938) and Vygotsky (1978) agreed learning occurs within a socially constructed and supportive learning environment. Strengthening teachers as powerful learners raises their students’ literacy learning achievement and supports teachers’ self-efficacy in their craft (Rosenholtz, 1991). A heightened sense of self-efficacy as learner and learning leader supports powerful collaborative literacy learning communities and lessen the negative influences of the traditional culture of learning in schools.

3) Influences of the traditional culture of learning constrain collaborative literacy learning communities. Unsupportive learning environments with disorganization in learning also threaten teachers’ self-efficacy in their craft and contribute to these
constraints. Lyons and Pinnell (2001) discussed the importance of colleagues’ talk about teaching practices to improve learning and teaching. Unsupportive learning environments and the lack of purpose or direction in learning discourage colleagues’ shared talk about teaching and weaken literacy learning community. These conditions constrain literacy learning and encourage the bureaucratic top-down control of schools, one of the major reform perspectives.

4) A pattern of reciprocity in learning and learning leadership between the literacy specialist and classroom teachers is necessary for the success of collaborative literacy learning communities. Teachers’ shared dialogue about their teaching improves their teaching practices as well as a spirit of camaraderie to encourage literacy learning and literacy learning leadership (Little, 1981, 1982, 1990).

5) A professional leadership approach and role modeling as learner and learning leader support the literacy specialist as learning leader. Reciprocity in learning and learning leadership between the literacy specialist and classroom teacher relies on trust, rapport, and shared professional dialogue and feedback about literacy between the literacy specialist and classroom teachers. These conditions support a powerful literacy learning culture in the school. Exercising a hands-off approach toward teachers discourages or limits collaborative learning. Although most participants agreed the literacy specialist is welcomed as the literacy leader and is an integral part of the literacy learning community, some participants did not hold the same beliefs. These teachers relied on their teaching experiences as their guide in their literacy learning and teaching. Recognizing the importance of strengthening collaborative literacy learning cultures in
Title 1 schools is vital in meeting school reform demands and avoiding school reform initiatives enforcing the traditional culture of learning.

6) The literacy specialist's unprofessional leadership style and lack of literacy expertise constrain the effects of the literacy specialist as learning leader. Since the literacy specialist is the literacy expert in schools, this specialist must know how to impart knowledge of literacy learning and teaching as well as work with adults (International Reading Council, 1998).

7) Modeling as learner and learning leader with a supportive leadership style supports the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader. Reciprocity in learning and learning leadership between the classroom teacher and literacy specialist supports the classroom teacher as literacy learning leader. The classroom teacher learning leader can act as a visible leader among colleagues or as a supportive learning leader on the side. Teachers' literacy learning leadership is both an individual and group leadership effort. Modeling as learner and leader supports the reciprocity of learning and learning leadership in collaborative literacy learning communities. A teacher's supportive leadership style strengthens other teachers' self-confidence and self-efficacy as literacy learners and leaders. Learning leaders' preferences for visible or on-the-side leadership efforts are dependent on their personalities. Reciprocity in learning is strengthened through individual or group learning leadership efforts.

8) Influences of the traditional culture of learning as well as an unsupportive leadership style and the lack of knowledge about literacy constrain the classroom teacher as learning leader. Research about school reform supports classroom teachers as the experts about teaching and learning leaders among colleagues (Barth, 1990). These
beliefs are contradicted when teachers view themselves as followers and not leaders of learning and rely on patterns of conservative thinking in their literacy teaching practices. These beliefs and attitudes discourage collaborative literacy learning and encourage conformity and passiveness in teaching. This situation leads to uncertainty in teaching, disenchantment with the teaching profession, and eventual attrition from the workforce and the eventual deprofessionalization of the teaching profession (Rosenholtz, 1991).

Effective collaborative literacy learning communities are intended to raise the professionalization of teaching by encouraging teachers to be active in their practice by assuming learning and learning leadership roles.

Recommendations

This section discusses recommendations for school and district level school administrators and for further research study to raise Title I schools’ interest in collaborative literacy learning communities.

1) District and school administrators should study the three models of collaborative literacy learning communities to assist district and school administrators in understanding how to establish and support collaborative learning communities in their schools. This will help district and school level administrators understand consequences on collaborative learning cultures in schools resulting from a single-minded top-down type of administration. To redress this, suggest more effective ways of working with teachers through the process of collaborative literacy learning.

2) Qualitative studies of departmentalizing teaching in the Title I elementary schools should be considered in two areas: reading, and math and science. By allowing
teachers to choose their preferred area of teaching, and focusing teachers’ concentration in one area, literacy collaboration among colleagues, their teaching practices, and students’ academic achievement can be improved. These results will redress school reform demands.

3) Providing incentive-based professional development in teachers’ teaching areas both during and after school hours will reinforce the value of collaboration. Extended professional development raises teachers’ self-efficacy in their craft and provides encouragement to engage in shared learning with colleagues. Additionally, incentives can be helpful in guiding teachers to assume literacy learning leadership roles among their colleagues. These incentives will interest and encourage classroom teachers to become active as literacy learning leaders among their colleagues.

4) More literacy specialists in Title 1 schools are needed to work with teachers in the classrooms as co-learners and co-teachers as a literacy learning community. Interactive learning enables both the literacy specialist and classroom teacher to act as learners and learning leaders for each other. This learning will strengthen the learning community within the school.

5) Consider the literacy specialists’ roles to reflect two main areas: primary (Kindergarten through grade two) and intermediate (grades three through five). The literacy specialist can become more effective in the role of literacy learning leader by concentrating on one main area. Research how literacy specialists can become more influential in the school’s collaborative literacy learning community by conducting a qualitative study in Title 1 schools to compare the effects of literacy specialists in the role
as learning leader for both primary and intermediate as opposed to literacy specialists in either a primary or intermediate role.

6) More effective ways of establishing and maintaining collaborative learning environments within and across Title 1 schools needs to remain an active area of inquiry. Incorporate the role of the literacy specialist and classroom teacher as learning leaders within these learning communities. Teachers’ collegial shared learning efforts strengthen the literacy learning community by raising teachers’ self-efficacy as literacy learners and teachers. Strengthening teachers’ shared learning also can reduce threats to teachers’ self-efficacy as literacy teachers and reduce fears of engaging in collaboration.

7) Research protocols need to be conducted to explore the roles of classroom teachers as learning leaders among their peers. This research will clarify these teachers’ roles as learners and learning leaders and document their influences on their colleagues.

8) Conduct a qualitative study investigating two schools that reflect their administrators’ encouragement and support or lack of encouragement and support for collaborative learning about literacy among their teachers. This research will increase understanding about school administrators’ influence on the collaborative learning of the teachers within their schools.

Summary

The purpose of this research was to investigate the culture of learning in three Title 1 schools. These investigations were made through the perceptions and perspectives of the teachers in these schools. Collaborative learning communities meet the demands of school reform by improving Title 1 Schools (Glickman and Alridge,
Landmark exhibited a strong collaborative literacy learning culture by focusing on the importance of constructive learning efforts or the "we-ness" and teamwork in learning. Landmark also believed role modeling as learner and learning leader set presidents for the exchange of learning and learning leadership roles. Covey believed collaboration involved a top-down approach to learning. Although Covey concentrated on the need to remain autonomous in routine literacy teaching practices and the avoidance of literacy learning leadership roles, this school maintained a wishful thinking attitude. Farsey exhibited total disinterest in collaborative learning and believed collaboration was burdensome and wasteful creating a sense that they were on a deserted island. While Landmark concentrated on developing "we-ness" in learning, Farsey focused on "I." The re-culturization of Title 1 schools is a popular issue because the future of collaborative learning communities remains suspect (Fullan, 2001). These schools cannot be deserted islands or wishful thinkers. Title 1 Schools must embrace a learning spirit of "teamwork all around." As the twenty-first century continues to unfold, these schools must strive to trust in a culture of collaborative learning to become democratic contexts for learning.

As a literacy specialist I have worked with students as well as teachers in Title 1 schools. I always wanted to be as effective as possible in this role and I knew collaborative learning with teachers was the answer. However, I learned collaboration is not an easy task as a result of the lack of time, my additional responsibilities, and teachers' overwhelming responsibilities. Many times teachers avoided the responsibilities of shared learning and refused to assume roles as literacy learning leaders. Teachers were disinterested in after-school study group sessions and other
extended professional development opportunities in literacy learning. I felt like I was alone in my endeavors to create a powerful collaborative literacy learning culture at my school causing me to question my talent, initiatives and efforts as a learning leader.

Fortunately, my father influenced my passion for learning and becoming a lifelong learner. I realize this quality is important to become a skilled professional and a powerful influence on others. This passion has guided any decisions I have made concerning my career. These feelings as well as my interest to learn with and through others motivated me to pursue an EdD Degree to research the broad topic of collaboration.

Although I have always found the topic of collaboration interesting, learning about the historical context of school reform, heightened my interest. I wanted to learn the extent to which the influences of the traditional culture of learning affect teachers’ interest in collaboration. After having conducted and analyzed my research, I see these negative influences are much alive and, unfortunately, doing very well. However, I have learned collaborative learning can be successful. I am prepared to face possible disinterest in collaboration because I understand why teachers would prefer learning in isolation. More importantly, my passion for collaborative literacy learning and literacy learning leadership has been reenergized causing me to become more motivated to encourage and support collaborative learning among my colleagues to function as a powerful literacy learning community.

Finally, and most importantly, I believe powerful learning supports democracy in our society. Effective collaboration improves literacy teaching practices, raises students’ literacy achievement, and strengthens teachers’ self-confidence as effective literacy
learners and literacy instructors. These effects preserve communities of collaborative
learning in Title 1 schools and eliminate the need for school reform. Making students
more proficient in literacy raises their self-confidence and encourages them to become
independent life-long learners. Students will become productive and responsible citizens
of our society capable of meeting the challenges of our diverse and constantly changing
world.
APPENDIX I

LETTER OF PARTICIPATION

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Department of Curriculum & Instruction
4505 Maryland Parkway
Las Vegas, NV 89154

I am Carol Ann Esposito, a doctoral student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction.

I am requesting your participation in a research project studying teachers’ perceptions and perspectives on collaborative learning communities in literacy teaching and the influences on these communities from literacy leaders.

Your participation will involve an initial interview followed by possible follow up interviews. The interviews will be solely with the researcher and will last 30 to 45 minutes each. There are minimal risks or discomforts associated with this research and its cost will involve your time spent during the interviewing sessions.

Your potential benefits from this research are the reporting of the results of the collected data and its contribution toward strengthening collaborative learning among teachers in the area of literacy teaching. Your participation will add to the general body of knowledge on this subject.

You will not be receiving compensation for your time spent in this study.

Your participation is completely voluntary and your anonymity will be maintained. All records of data will be retained for a period of three years in a safe and confidential location in the home of the researcher and then destroyed.

For questions concerning this research study, you may contact me at my home at 562-0168 or my doctoral committee chair, Dr. Martha Young, through the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at 895-0836. If you have questions regarding the rights of research subjects, please contact the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 895-2794.
Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from participation at any time during the study.

By signing below, you are acknowledging receipt of this information regarding the study and agree to participate. You will be given a copy of this form.

__________________________________________
Signature of Participant

__________________________________________
Signature of Researcher

Date

Date
APPENDIX II

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to explain your understanding of collaboration and what influences your literacy teaching.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

How many years have you been teaching in this school? 2-4 5-7 8-12 13-16 17 or more

Please circle the areas in which you hold a literacy endorsement, certificate or degree; literacy endorsement; reading endorsement; reading specialist; K-8 literacy M Ed; TESL; other ________

BACKGROUND

Please rank most (1) to least (5) how the following have influenced you concept of collaboration about literacy since you have become a teacher:

  a _____ the principal
  b _____ the literacy specialist
  c _____ other classroom teachers in this school
  d _____ teachers or literacy specialists in other schools
  e _____ new faculty
  f _____ professional resources (professional journals or books, reading programs)
g _____ team teaching partner

h _____ professional development (in-services, staff developments, district-related professional development, university-related courses or faculty, literacy-related organizations or study groups, literacy conferences)

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your definition of literacy collaboration?

2. Describe ways that collaboration benefits your literacy teaching practices.

3. What makes collaboration unsuccessful?

4. What is your definition of a “learning community?”

5. In a perfect world, how would a learning community affect or influence you and your literacy teaching practice?

6. What qualities of an effective leader of literacy learning do you consider important?

7. Describe the leadership style or qualities of the literacy specialist at your school.

8. Describe one or more situations in which your literacy specialist exhibited characteristics of being an effective learning leader.

9. How have you acted as a learning leader among the teachers at your school? Describe one or more situations.

10. What prevents a teacher from developing as a learning leader among one’s colleagues?

11. Describe one or more situations in which the literacy specialist at your school has motivated you to act as a learning leader among the teachers in your school?
APPENDIX III

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LITERACY SPECIALISTS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to understand your perceptions of collaboration and your perspectives on learning communities.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

How many years have you taught in a regular classroom? Never 1-2 3-5 6-8 9-12 13-16 17 or more

How many years have you been a literacy specialist? 3-5 6-7 8-12 13 or more

Have you only been a literacy specialist at this school? Yes No

How many years have you been in this school as a literacy specialist? 1-2 3-5 6-9 10 or more

Please circle all areas in which you hold a literacy endorsement, specialist title, or degree:
literacy endorsement; reading endorsement; reading specialist; K-8 literacy M ED; TESL; other____________________

INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain or describe situations to cause collaboration among teachers to be necessary for learning about literacy teaching and learning.

2. From your perspective, explain the benefits of teachers’ collaboration about literacy learning and teaching.
3. What are the reasons that make teachers’ collaboration not effective?

4. What is your definition of a “learning community?”

5. How has this type of learning affected you and your literacy leadership role?

6. In a perfect world, what would be the qualities of an effective literacy leader?

7. Describe yourself as an effective literacy leader.

8. Define your concept of an ineffective literacy leader.

9. Can you explain how the teachers with whom you work influenced or affected your practice as a literacy leader?
APPENDIX IV

FIRST FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW FOR FRANK (CLASSROOM TEACHER - “LANDMARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL”)

1. What motivates you to share what you have learned with your colleagues?

2. Have your recent inservices increased your motivation to share your knowledge with your colleagues?

3. Some people are unwilling to participate in trying new ideas. Why?

4. You talked about starting with the end in mind. Must people participate in trying new ideas? Why?

5. I am part of a learning community among the teachers at my school. Describe me.

6. Do you consider yourself a leader of learning among the teachers at your school? If so, describe yourself. If not, why not?

7. Do you think you’ve influenced or affected the practice of the literacy specialist at your school? How?
APPENDIX V

FIRST FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW FOR MARY (CLASSROOM TEACHER –
"LANDMARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL")

1. Can you explain how the learning during your collaboration meetings with your colleagues is facilitated?

2. Do you find someone assumes the leadership role during your PLC meetings? Who?

3. Do you find that the teachers preferring to work behind closed classroom doors ever collaborate with you about literacy learning? When, where, how, and why?

4. Can you describe the positive attitude of your literacy specialist?

5. Why do you think some teachers here are not receptive to the literacy specialist’s attempts to help them with their literacy teaching practices?

6. You said you plan math together but reading has not been done in the same way. Can you elaborate on this?

7. Can you elaborate more on what you meant by “expanding your horizons?”

8. Why do you think other classroom teachers are not going to the IRA conference?

9. Are all teachers involved in the family literacy night events? How are these events planned, organized, and facilitated?
APPENDIX VI

FIRST FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW FOR SUE (LITERACY SPECIALIST –
“LANDMARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL”

1. What causes some people not to want to collaborate?

2. What percentage of the responsibility for learning in your study group sessions do the
teachers hold?

3. Who are the tutors for your after school program?

4. How do you get into classrooms for modeling and demonstrating? Do you feel free to
go into classrooms at your will?

5. Do you find teachers are motivated to act as learning leaders among their peers by your
example of being a learning leader? In what ways? If not, why not?

6. How do you decide which teachers need that extra “push” (ex. taking the Project Life
Reading Intervention Program, etc.)?

7. How would an effective literacy leader approach someone who is just not open to new
and better ideas?

8. Frank and Mary are leaders of literacy learning for their peers. Can you explain why?
APPENDIX VII

FIRST FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW FOR ROSE (CLASSROOM TEACHER - “COVEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL”)

1. What are teachers’ best sources for learning about literacy teaching and practices?

2. The literacy-related collaboration between my colleagues and me has enlightened me in more ways than just improving my teaching practices. I have learned

3. Describe the most effective literacy specialist.

4. My new job assignment is to create a collaborative literacy learning culture in my school. I need to

5. Why do some people shy away from a collaborative setting by “shutting their doors?”

6. Do teachers tend to create a safe learning environment to ask questions, experiment, reflect on practices, and then ask more questions?

7. What do you think are the underlying reasons for disillusionment with teaching?

8. What comes easier for teachers: acting as leaders or learners?

9. Acting as a learning leader for my peers has caused me to grow as a professional because …
APPENDIX VIII

FIRST FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW FOR TINA (CLASSROOM TEACHER – “COVEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL”)

1. A teacher at my school has created a successful collaborative culture in my school because …

2. I can say collaboration among my peers has made me grow as a professional because …

3. Why do some people shy away from a collaborative setting by “shutting their doors?”

4. Do teachers tend to create a safe learning environment to ask questions, experiment, reflect on practices, and then ask more questions?

5. What do you think are the underlying reasons for disillusionment with teaching?

6. What comes easier for teachers: acting as leaders or learners?

7. What are teachers’ best sources for learning about literacy learning and teaching?

8. The literacy-related collaboration between my colleagues and me has enlightened me in more ways than just improving my teaching practices. I have learned …

9. Describe the most effective literacy specialist.
APPENDIX IX

FIRST FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW FOR LUCY (LITERACY SPECIALIST – “COVEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL”)

1. What stops people from acting as “visible leaders” among their colleagues?

2. Your school is traveling on the “in-road” to collaboration. Tell me about the learning environment in the school.

3. Is an “in-road” to collaboration an effective way to establish effective change for teachers. If so, describe this change.

4. You’ve tried collaborating with peers but you’ve found the process too difficult. What would you do or say to teachers to try to make collaboration work?

5. You modeled or demonstrated a lesson and the teacher was interested and started to ask you questions in order to learn more. What do you do next?

6. Does the existence of the top-down control of learning in schools influence the literacy specialist’s efforts to be a learning leader for the teachers in the school?

7. What would stop a Literacy specialist from going into a classroom aside from imposed duties and an unwelcome feeling?

8. You’ve written a book entitled The Literacy Specialist’s Survival Kit. What are the names of your chapters?
9. Are you a member of a Professional Learning Community or a member of the school's peer coaching team?
APPENDIX X

FIRST FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW FOR HELEN (CLASSROOM TEACHER – “FARSEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL”)

1. You said in-service presenters have been “pushy-gung-hooey.” What makes an inservice more effective for you?

2. You explained why you and your team partner can be collaborative. What is necessary for you to be able to effectively collaborate with another colleague?

3. Do you find collaboration among teachers exists in this school? Why or why not?

4. What are the necessary ingredients for effective collaboration among teachers?

5. What should a literacy specialist do in order to be more effective as a literacy learning leader for teachers?

6. What is the purpose of your Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and how are your PLC’s facilitated? Have they been effective?

7. Who makes the decisions about ordering reading materials? Aside from the leveled readers, have other reading materials been ordered?

8. Do you find your Student Improvement Program (SIP) meetings are effective or ineffective? Why?

9. Explain why a classroom teacher would be inclined to become a leader of literacy learning among his/her peers?
APPENDIX XI

FIRST FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW FOR JESSE (CLASSROOM TEACHER –
“FARSEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL”)

1. You said “We’re bombarded with ‘This is the way to do it’.” Who says this?
2. Aside from the lack of time, why else do teachers choose not to collaborate with their peers at school?
3. Collaboration among teachers exists at Farsey elementary school. Can you explain what this collaboration looks like?
4. What is the purpose of a learning community?
5. You said the teachers in your Professional Learning Community (PLC) are very agreeable. What are they agreeable about?
6. In your opinion, why would a classroom teacher be inclined to act as a leader of literacy learning among his/her colleagues?
7. How are decisions made about ordering students’ and teachers’ literacy materials at this school?
8. Are your Student Improvement Program (SIP) meetings effective? Why or why not?
APPENDIX XII

FIRST FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW FOR LONA (LITERACY SPECIALIST – “FARSEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL”)

Lona – Literacy Specialist – “Farsey elementary school”

First Follow-Up Interview

1. What happened to the 3 literacy people at this school?

2. How essential do you consider yourself in the collaboration process here at the school?

3. Do you find teachers teaching for a number of years choose to collaborate or not collaborate with their colleagues?

4. What are the effects of new and seasoned teachers engaging in collaboration?

5. In your opinion who needs collaboration more: new or seasoned teachers and why?

6. You said some of these Professional Learning Communities (PLC’s) can get off on a tangent. What do you mean by that?

7. What does a literacy leader need to be knowledgeable about?

8. If you were just starting your career as a literacy specialist would you do things differently? And if so, in what ways?

9. What have classroom teachers taught you about collaboration?

10. What have classroom teachers taught you about literacy learning leadership?

11. What does being a leader mean to you? Is this different than being a learning leader?
12. Can leadership ever be shared? How?
APPENDIX XIII

SECOND FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

1. You’ve written a book for your colleagues entitled Advice on Literacy Learning Collaboration Among Teachers. What are the key points you made in your book?

2. You’ve written a book for literacy specialists in schools entitled Advice to Literacy Specialists. What are the key points you made in your book?
APPENDIX XIV

SECOND FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW FOR LITERACY SPECIALISTS

1. What do the teachers in your school need to learn in order to strengthen the learning within their literacy learning collaboration efforts?

2. What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of classroom teachers’ literacy learning leadership roles?
REFERENCES


Callahan, R. E. (1962). *Education and the cult of efficiency*. Chicago: The University of
Chicago Press.


Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.


170


172


VITA

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Carol Ann Esposito

Home Address:
9429 White Ridge Avenue
Las Vegas, Nevada 89149

Degrees:
Bachelor of Arts, Liberal Arts, 1972
The College of Staten Island, Staten Island, New York

Master of Science, Education, 1987
Long Island University, Brentwood, New York

Dissertation Title: Perspectives of Collaborative Literacy Learning Communities: What Three Title I Schools Teach Us

Dissertation Committee:
Chairperson, Dr. Martha Young, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Tom W. Bean, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Linda F. Quinn, Ph. D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. LeAnn G. Putney, Ph. D.