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Professional Learning through Professional Learning Communities, Mentorship, and Shared Leadership

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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING THROUGH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES, MENTORSHIP, AND

SHARED LEADERSHIP

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Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

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A THREE PART DISSERTATION:

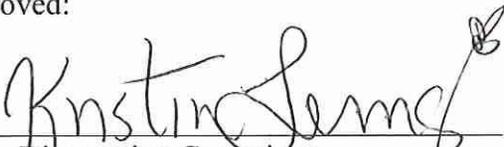EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

IMPROVING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY STRUCTURES FOR
ENHANCED PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING THROUGH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES,
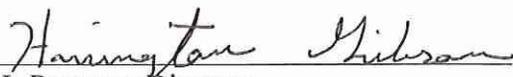MENTORSHIP, AND SHARED LEADERSHIP

Stephen James Juracka

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

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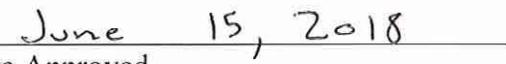Chair, Dissertation Committee

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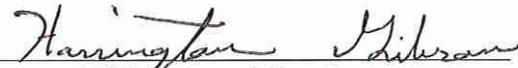
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Dean, National College of Education

_____June 15, 2018_____
Date Approved

Dissertation Organization Statement

This document is organized to meet the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006). For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The "program" can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement with a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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ABSTRACT

This Policy Advocacy paper focuses on expanding the District ABC Staff Development policy to include Drago-Severson's (2009) pillars of adult learning. Research indicates the inclusion of a mentorship program, professional learning communities, and teacher leadership opportunities, will increase teacher collaboration, engagement, and professional capacities. There are significant educational, economic, political, social, legal and moral implications associated with the proposed staff development policy. Additionally, the staff development policy requires careful planning, implementation, and assessment, as will be addressed in this Policy Advocacy paper.

PREFACE

I currently serve as the Associate Superintendent of Instruction and Personnel in District ABC (pseudonym to protect anonymity). In my role I have strong interest in creating a professional environment for teachers that promotes their ability to collaborate, that gives them ownership of their work, and that supports their professional growth. Throughout my career I have heard from many teachers who have felt undervalued and who felt they had little opportunity to impact change within their schools. I have worked with teachers who felt that they had little voice in their educational community and who often worked in isolation, devoid of any collaboration around curriculum and instruction. Teaching can often be an isolated experience and providing teachers with an opportunity to collaborate, take ownership of their craft, and grow professionally, is the primary drive within this policy advocacy paper.

When I arrived in District ABC in 2015 the district was not organized in such a way that allowed teachers to collaborate on a regular basis. There was little time for teachers to discuss and develop curriculum. Teachers often worked in isolation and grade levels did not follow a consistent curricular scope and sequence; this led to varied learning experiences for students and an inability to gauge the effectiveness of the curriculum students were learning. Student learning experiences varied greatly from teacher to teacher, and grade level teachers did not utilize common assessments to measure student progress.

It was amidst this situation that I began my Program Evaluation which sought to uncover the effectiveness of the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) in improving teacher engagement as defined by autonomy, mastery, collaboration, and shared purpose. The ILT was a newly created committee which included informal teacher leadership. Teacher leaders were charged with

starting the curriculum process and began to drive teacher collaboration around the creation of a common curricula.

As the ILT and district teacher leaders evolved in the 2016-2017 school year, District ABC began to grow our teaming efforts using professional learning communities. In the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years, our teacher leaders were trained in effective PLC practices and the district began to improve in the areas of collaboration, shared leadership, and professional practice. The following policy advocacy paper seeks to expound upon the current staff development policy of District ABC to solidify the inclusion of PLCs, teacher leadership and mentorship in Board Policy. This paper will analyze the pros and cons of the staff development policy and advocate to include the above elements in the staff development policy of District ABC.

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VISION STATEMENT

Issue Awareness

Research supports that quality professional learning opportunities, that support adult

learning and development, are instrumental in propelling school progress and improvement

(Drago-Severson, 2009). As the Associate Superintendent of Instruction and Personnel of

District ABC., providing meaningful, valuable, and effective professional learning opportunities

to teachers and staff is a significant focus of my service to the district.   Like many professionals

involved in the area of human resources, I deeply value the individual talents and skills that my

teachers offer to the district, and it is my job to support their continuous growth and

improvement while capitalizing on their strengths. In this vision statement I will outline District

ABC's current *staff development* policy and its areas of deficit. I will also begin to lay a

foundation for a future *professional learning* policy and its components. I should note here that

the terms staff development, professional development, and professional learning may often be

used interchangeably due to current policy language and language to be used for future policy.

Currently, the staff development policy within District ABC is devoid of meaningful

professional learning supports for teachers and it needs expansion to include effective

professional learning opportunities. This policy came to light as I, and the district's leadership

team, sought to develop a professional learning plan for the district. In examining the current

staff development policy, we realized that its primary focus was generically centered on the

development of skills and practices to maintain high levels of job performance and satisfaction.

Additionally, the policy included a fragmented mandate to incorporate biannual teacher training

on such topics as ADD, ADHD, and the use of Psychotropic or psychostimulant medications in

school aged children. While such training and professional learning opportunities may be valuable, the current staff development policy is lacking specific, focused, effective, and robust forms of professional learning.

Further, the need for a professional development policy/plan became apparent as there was little evidence of professional learning continuity or focus from one year to the next. According to Fullan (2011), schools must be narrowly focused on a few priorities to be effective. District ABC, however, did not have a strategic plan for professional learning which left professional learning to be random, disconnected and lacking direction. In seeking to create a more continuous and focused professional learning plan I became keenly aware that our district staff development program needed to be expanded in order to increase our effectiveness as a professional learning community.

In addition to examining District ABC's staff development plan and recognizing its areas of deficiency, I also began to recognize that our current staff did not have the conditions or competencies that support effective staff development. Conditions include the systemic structures designed for staff development such as time and tools (Wagner, 2006). Additionally, competencies include the skill sets and knowledge to promote school improvement efforts (Wagner, 2006). District ABC needed to expand its staff development policy to provide for the conditions and competencies that would assist in creating an effective staff development plan.

Let me pause here, to provide some context and provide a brief history of the school district before I begin to expand upon the conditional deficits. I came to District ABC in July 2015, to serve as the Associate Superintendent of the Instruction and Personnel. As I began my tenure within the district, I began to work closely with teachers at each grade level. I met informally with grade level teachers and went on a campaign to gain a historical, and then

current, understanding of the district curriculum, teaming structures, assessment structures, student data, professional development plans and so forth. As I conducted my informal fact-finding mission, it became overwhelmingly clear that we faced a few systemic challenges that led to conditional and competency-based deficiencies in the area of staff development.

Returning to the conditional deficits, I quickly became aware that there were no teaming structures and teachers operated in curricular and instructional isolation. Teachers within the district did not operate in grade level teams. Teachers did not meet regularly or have common planning time, and they didn't adhere to a common curriculum (Juracka, 2017). Further, teachers worked in isolation, each teaching different standards at different times throughout the school year (Juracka, 2017). In addition to lacking common curricula and common plan time, teachers had few, if any, opportunities for team or grade level leadership. Consequently, with grade level teaming nonexistent, grade level teacher leadership opportunities were absent within district structures (Juracka, 2017). From a historical perspective, these conditional deficits led to a need for a staff development plan that would support teaming and teacher leadership opportunities.

From a competency standpoint, although the district staff development plan mentioned *developing skills and practices to maintain high levels of performance*, it did not include specific competencies or skills that would lead to high levels of effectiveness. For example, the staff development plan lacked any mention of a mentorship program to support new and developing educators. Further, inasmuch as research supports the effectiveness of teaming and leadership opportunities for teachers (Drago-Severson, 2009; Fiarman, 2017), the district's staff development plan did not mention building leadership capacity among its teachers and it lacked any mention of the inclusion of teams.

Drago-Severson (2009) explains that some of the most powerful and effective adult learning opportunities include teaming, mentoring and leadership opportunities for teachers. Because our current staff development policy lacks specificity and is absent of such research-based practices, I am seeking to expand our current staff development policy, to include Drago-Severson's (2009) work which incorporates the components of teaming, mentorship, and teacher leadership opportunities.

Recommendations and Efficacy

First, because the current staff development policy is devoid of a mentorship program for new and developing teachers, I am recommending its inclusion. Mentorship enables adults to support and nurture one another (Drago-Severson, 2009). Mentorship gives teachers the opportunity to share instructional ideas, promote best practices, examine assumptions and solve educational challenges. The mentor relationship can provide professional support to staff who are in need of professional growth and also serve to build betterment into the lives of others (Drago-Severson, 2008; Dungy, 2010). The relationship between the mentor and mentee can assist in challenging philosophies and personal investments in an open and non-confronting manner (Drago-Severson, 2008). Further, mentorship can serve to lead teachers to explore new perspectives while critiquing and examining their own (Drago-Severson, 2008).

District ABC's current staff development policy also lacked any inclusion of a teaming structure or professional learning communities. Teaming is a powerful organizational structure that supports the growth and learning of adults (Drago-Severson, 2009; Dufour & Dufour, 2013). Teaming also helps decrease teachers' isolation while opening up lines of communication for adult development (Drago-Severson, 2009; Dufour & Eaker, 2005). Because teaching has often been viewed as an isolated and private act, the creation of teams allows for greater teacher

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collaboration which has been described as one of the single most important initiatives in school improvement efforts (Dufour & Eaker, 2005).

Additionally, the inclusion of teams can extend learning opportunities to teachers whereby they can share ideas, embark on collective inquiry, develop curriculum, and align assessments (Drago-Severson, 2008, Drago-Severson, 2009). The teaming structure helps to establish an environment that leads to a shared vision of instruction, curriculum, assessment and student interventions (Kanold, 2011). Kanold (2011) notes that when teachers have the ability to professionally collaborate around student learning and instruction, the collaborative process serves teacher development and growth.

In addition to teaming and mentoring, District ABCs staff development plan is also devoid of leadership opportunities. Drago-Severson (2009) explains that providing leadership opportunities for teachers is transformational in building organizational and human capacity. Providing leadership roles promotes school improvement, teacher development, higher morale and increased teacher retention rates. Additionally, sharing leadership responsibilities empowers teachers to assume leadership roles and take ownership in school improvement (Drago-Severson, 2009). When school districts establish leadership roles they extend opportunities to share leadership responsibilities and build capacity in others (Katz, Earl, & Jaafar, 2009). Leadership roles allow teachers to encourage and motivate each other while setting a collective purpose and focus for their work (Dufour & Eaker, 2005; Katz et al., 2009). For example, extending leadership opportunities to grade level teacher-leaders within District ABC will foster a sense of direction for grade level teams whereby the grade level teacher leader will prepare meeting agendas, establish team norms, and set the course of action for team curricular development.

In sum, the current staff development policy in District ABC is devoid of effective professional learning opportunities for teachers. The current policy, while generally focused on high levels of job performance, does not include the conditions for effective professional growth. Further, it does not include the development of specific competencies for teacher growth and improvement. Hence, this policy advocacy will focus on including the elements of teaming, leadership opportunities, and mentoring to lead to a more specific and effective professional learning policy.

These additions to the current staff development policy will serve to concretize, within district policy, a mentorship program, a teaming structure, and distributive leadership opportunities, which will, in turn, add to the efficacy of the district staff development policy. In so doing, the operationalization of the future staff development policy will lead to greater professional learning for teachers and support teacher growth, development and distributive leadership.

The future professional development policy will include a mentorship program that will allow for the mentorship of new and developing teachers designed to support teacher growth and development. The mentorship program will allow for new staff to be mentored by veteran staff with an excellent teaching record. Key components of the mentoring program will include peer observation and reflections, cognitive coaching opportunities, and new teacher meetings which will support understanding and developing curricula, understanding student data, and other relevant educational topics associated with teaching and learning.

Beyond the mentorship programs, the future staff development policy will solidify, in board policy, the inclusion of grade level and content area teams led by teacher leaders. The teaming structure will ensure that grade level teams and curricular teams are established, and

commissioned time to develop curriculum and assessments unique to grade level and content areas. Teaming will be formally authorized to exist through the staff development policy, which will strengthen teacher collaboration, shared instructional practices, shared purpose, and curricular development. Further, teaming will reinforce collegiality and reduce teacher isolation giving teachers a greater sense of common purpose and professional community. Teaming will also ensure that curricula are designed with teacher input and understanding thus giving teachers a sense of autonomy and ownership of their craft (Farris-Berg & Dirkswager, 2012).

Finally, the future staff development policy will include teacher leadership opportunities designed to reinforce distributive and shared leadership principles while also ensuring greater continuity and effectiveness among teams. Teacher leadership opportunities will serve to guide grade level teams through the curricular development process and ensure a consistent and viable curriculum for all students. Teacher leaders will be able to share in the curricular decision-making process with the intent of creating a sense of ownership and autonomy for leaders and team members. Beyond distributive leadership, teacher leadership opportunities will allow for the building of greater leadership capacity within the school district. Teacher leaders will be able to engage in professional learning opportunities designed to increase their leadership capacity and grow their skills and expertise, thus growing the skill set of the staff.

With the inclusion of effective team leaders, teachers will be able to seek instructional clarity and examine instructional practices as a team. Team collaborations will have greater focus and purpose, and teachers will be able to unpack educational practices with increased effectiveness (Kanold, 2011).

Teacher leadership can be effective in encouraging teachers and ensuring participation in the work of their professional learning communities (Kanold, 2011). Dufour & Dufour (2013)

explain that effective leaders can engage teams in new work, set new standards for practice, and accomplish new goals through a concept called *reciprocal accountability* whereby the members of the team look to each other for accountability and responsibility. Therefore, including teacher leadership opportunities in the future staff development policy will serve to increase teacher shared accountability, grow teacher leadership capacity, implement shared leadership practices, and create more effective team environments.

The future staff development policy of District ABC will include provisions that will increase the professional capacity of our teachers and allow for conditions that will better serve the professional growth of our teachers. Including a mentorship program will create a system that will support the professional growth of both new and developing teachers. Additionally, commissioning a team structure in board policy will ensure that grade level and content area teams exist for ensuring a consistent and viable curriculum. Finally, providing teacher leadership opportunities will ensure more effective teamwork and ensure that leadership is shared among teachers.

ANALYSIS OF NEED

District ABC's current staff development policy lacks any substantive language that promotes specific teacher growth and learning. The policy I am advocating will include Drago-Severson's (2009) pillars for adult learning including *teams,* which I will refer to as professional learning communities, *teacher leadership* opportunities, and a *mentoring* program. This policy advocacy in an outgrowth of the work I did in my Program Evaluation (Juracka, 2016) and my Change Plan (Juracka, 2017).

In my Program Evaluation I sought to determine if the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), as an organizational structure, produced greater teacher autonomy, ownership, shared purpose and collaboration, among grade level teachers. As covered in detail within my Program Evaluation (Juracka, 2016), the ILT did positively impact the four characteristics just mentioned. The Program Evaluation did, however, conclude with the need for improved professional learning communities (PLCs) and a need for well-trained teacher leaders.

Consequently, my Change Plan was aimed at improving the PLCs within District ABC by improving the leadership capacity of my grade level teacher leaders and providing structured protocols to guide the professional behaviors of our PLCs. After two years of research and implementation related to my Program Evaluation and Change Plan, District ABC has an Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) which consists of trained grade level teacher leaders that utilize specific protocols designed for effective PLCs. Further, the ILT is continuing to gauge its effectiveness by measuring collaboration, shared purpose, autonomy, and ownership. The improvements in our professional learning communities and the increase in leadership capacity among our grade level teacher leaders has driven me to strengthen our staff development policy within District ABC.

Policy Statement

As mentioned and outlined in the Vision Statement of this Policy Advocacy paper, I seek to expand District ABCs current staff development plan to include Drago-Severson's (2009) pillars of adult learning, including teaming, teacher leadership, and mentorship. This policy will solidify and make permanent the work of the Instructional Leadership Team and also ensure that teachers share in the leadership and decision making processes related to curriculum and instruction. Additionally, the future staff development policy will include a mentorship program that will be designed to provide support to new and veteran teachers through peer observations, instructional inquiry, professional goal setting and reflection.

The future staff development policy will commission the use of PLCs to support teacher teaming, teacher collaboration, improved instructional practice, teacher leadership, staff ownership, and student learning (Dufour & Dufour, 2013; Dufour & Eaker, 2005; Drago-Severson, 2009; 2013; Eaker & Keating, 2008; Farris-Berg & Dirkswager, 2012; Kanold, 2011). Additionally, the policy will include mentorship designed to support the professional growth of new teachers, retain high performing teachers, and invigorate veteran staff (Drago-Severson, 2009). Within this Analysis of Need section, I will continue by discussing the educational, economic, social, political, legal, and ethical implications of District ABC's future staff development policy.

Educational Analysis

Including professional learning communities and teacher leadership within the future staff development policy of District ABC will serve to expand teacher collaboration, knowledge, and ownership of curriculum and instruction (Dufour & Dufour, 2013; Farris-Berg & Dirkswager, 2012; Kanold, 2011). While teacher leaders will serve to drive PLC work, they are

also essential in developing and setting team norms for professional behaviors and establishing team commitments (Dufour & Dufour, 2013; Dufour & Eaker, 2005). PLC teacher leaders will set team agendas and facilitate the curricular development work within district. Policy development, aligned with creating teacher leadership positions to facilitate the work of PLCs, will assist in growing the leadership capacity of teachers while promoting teacher growth, increased teacher retention, teacher empowerment, and school improvement (Drago-Severson, 2009). Teacher leadership opportunities will foster the growth of human capital and teacher capacity (Kanold, 2011).

In addition to commissioning teacher leadership in the future staff development policy, District ABC will include the use of Professional Learning Communities. PLCs will serve to improve teacher collaboration while decreasing teacher isolation (Eaker & Keating, 2008; Kanold, 2011). PLCs will also, while creating a greater sense of collaboration, assist in creating a sense of reciprocal accountability whereby teachers rely on one another, creating a collective ownership of the curricular development process (Dufour & Dufour, 2013). Further, PLCs will foster high levels of commitment to student learning whereby teachers engage in shared inquiry, shared practices, and shared decision making (Drago-Severson, 2009; Dufour & Dufour, 2013; Farris-Berg & Dirkswager, 2012). While PLCs foster a sense of shared ownership, collaboration, and accountability, they are also designed to promote a consistent and viable curriculum that includes clear and consistent curricular priorities and common assessments (Dufour & Dufour, 2013). Finally, PLCs will allow for clarity of purpose, defining common goals, developing consensus, providing feedback and celebrating successes (Drago-Severson, 2009).

Finally, the future District ABC Staff development policy will be written to include a mentoring program designed to support new and veteran teachers. A mentoring program can aid

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in retaining new talent by providing them with mentorship from well trained, experienced teachers (Drago-Severson, 2009). Mentors can assist in providing support to new teachers by helping them manage new challenges around teaching, learning, and classroom management through the use of reflective conversations and practices (Drago-Severson, 2009). While mentees receive support in navigating new terrain and learning about instructional strategies, District ABC will receive professional replenishment as veteran teachers retire. Further, a mentorship program will assist building and district administration in the support and growth of new staff, decrease isolation, enhance reflective practice, and develop meaningful collaboration (Drago-Severson, 2009).

In sum, the creation of a staff development policy that creates teacher leadership, professional learning communities, and teacher mentorship, will prove to create greater teacher collaboration, improved practice and a consistent and viable curriculum (Drago-Severson, 2009; Dufour & Dufour, 2013; Farris-berg & Dirkswager, 2012; Kanold, 2011).

Economic Analysis

The future staff development policy of District ABC will include a mentoring program for new and veteran teachers, opportunities for teacher leadership, and the inclusion of PLCs. Each of these elements will have a financial implication as they require both time and human resources. Kanold (2011) alludes to the importance of paying teachers for their time and efforts performed outside of the school hours, and the staff development policy being advocated will require such efforts. Further, the time and effort required for professional development for the training of mentors, mentees, teacher leaders, and PLCs will also be an expense that must be accounted for within this policy.

To begin, within the mentorship program, mentors must be properly trained in the process of providing mentorship. Mentors need to be skilled in providing reflective feedback, observing teachers, and goal setting. Mentors must be able to provide collaborative support and a trustful professional relationship (Drago-Severson, 2009). Professional development must be provided to mentors to assist them in being effective. Such training will take place during the summer or after school and will require teachers to be paid at the negotiated collective bargaining contract rate.

Further, mentors and mentees will also need to be paid for their time outside of the regular school hours to conduct the work associated with the mentorship program. For example, pre-conferencing and reflective conferencing will need to be conducted outside of the regularly scheduled hours. This, again, will be an expense associated with all cognitive coaching experiences for both the mentor and the mentee. Additionally, the district may need to provide substitute coverage for veteran teachers who are observing new teachers during the cognitive coaching experience. Finally, the mentorship program will require after school meetings with building principals and myself, the Associate Superintendent of Instruction and Personnel, and mentees will also be compensated for those hours as well.

In sum, the mentorship program will require a financial investment as it will require teachers to be compensated for their time before or after school and the costs related with substitute teachers.

In addition to the mentorship program, there will also be financial implications associated with teacher leadership and the work of professional learning communities. First, to provide sound and effective leadership, teacher leaders will need to receive ongoing professional development in the areas of instruction, leadership, and team building. Such trainings may occur

either during or outside school hours, each of which includes a cost. When teacher leadership trainings occur outside school hours, District ABC will compensate those teachers for their time. When teachers receive professional training during school hours, the district will cover the cost of the substitute and any additional costs associated with their training.

Beyond the professional training of teacher leaders is the expense of PLC work. PLCs will be commissioned to delve into the work of curriculum development which takes considerable time. As such, teachers involved in the work of PLCs will be compensated for their work during the summers and after school hours. Additionally, PLC work that takes place during regular school hours will also have associated substitute costs.

District ABC's future staff development plan will have associated costs. The mentorship program, teacher leadership, professional development, and PLC work will require teachers to be compensated for their time and efforts. Recognizing that funding is needed to effectively implement such a policy there will need to be multiple revenue streams that support these efforts. One of the primary revenue streams will be that of Title I & II funds. District ABC, due to its high poverty rate, is eligible for significant Title I & II grant funding for professional development. Title I & II dollars will be used to fund the time needed for PLCs to collaborate by providing dollars for substitute teachers, after school PLC collaboration, and summer collaborations. Beyond Title I & II funds, District ABC will need to allocate local dollars for teacher leadership and mentorship stipends. Fortunately, due to substantial Title I & 2 monies, we are able to reallocate local professional development dollars to help support the teacher stipends required to fully fund and implement teacher leadership and mentorship. Title I & II dollars, therefore, allow District ABC to fully support collaboration time while allowing for the reallocation of local funds to support teacher leadership and mentorship efforts.

Social Analysis

Adding a mentoring program, teacher leadership positions, and PLC structures into the staff development policy of District ABC will have numerous social implications related to collaboration, culture, professional behaviors, and, to a more global extent, student learning and college and career readiness. The work of PLCs serves to decrease teacher isolation and develop a sense of collaboration (Dufour & Eaker, 2005). PLCs offer teachers a sense of collective commitment and a shared purpose whereby they work together for common goals and outcomes (Dufour & Dufour, 2013; Dufour & Eaker, 2005). When teachers share such a common commitment they are apt to share ideas, set collective goals, embrace high levels of student learning and perform instructional inquiry (Dufour & Dufour, 2013; Kanold 2011). Further, the collective commitments made by the individual PLCs serve as a connection to a larger sense of a shared vision and mission for both the individual PLCs and the larger school organization (Dufour & Eaker, 2005).

PLCs, by their very nature, have social implications in that they require teams to develop social norms and standards for professional behavior (Dufour & Eaker, 2005; Dufour & Dufour, 2013; Kanold 2011). PLC effectiveness requires teams to set up social systems which include team commitments, behavioral protocols, and logistical structures to guide their time and their agendas (Kanold, 2011). PLCs are designed to shape school and district culture by creating a social system rooted in collaboration, shared purpose and collective commitments to student learning and school success (Dufour & Eaker, 2005).

In addition to the social implications that are developed through PLCs, teacher leadership positions will also have a social impact as to how district PLCs operate and collaborate. First, effective teacher leadership is essential to the culture and processes that are the underpinning of PLC work. PLC teacher-leaders are charged with setting up a social system of reciprocal

accountability where they lead team culture in such a way that each member feels compelled to engage in new work, accomplish new goals, and set new standards (Dufour & Dufour, 2013). Leaders serve to maintain a clear focus and purpose for PLC work while supporting team collaboration, relationships, and accountability (Katz, Earl, & Jaafar, 2009). Additionally, leaders are purposed to motivate and encourage others, monitor and set team agendas, and support and build capacity in other team members (Katz, Earl, & Jaafar, 2009). Team leaders also serve to assist in building a culture where there is collective adult responsibility for student learning thereby building teacher instructional capacity through shared ideas and inquiry (Drago-Severson, 2009). As Drago-Severson (2009) posits, teacher leadership positions support adult learning and growth; they set a culture of shared ownership and decision making; and they set a tone for a healthier adult learning climate.

While there are social implications that relate to teacher leadership and professional learning communities, it is also true that a mentorship program has social implications. At its very heart, mentorship is purposed for teacher growth and professional development. Mentorship allows teachers an opportunity to develop and improve their teaching practices by pairing mentees with veteran mentors (Drago-Severson, 2009). Mentorship also serves to retain new teachers while supporting them through the new challenges and trials of teaching (Drago-Severson, 2009). Ensuring that a mentorship program is embedded in our staff development policy also exemplifies our district's commitment to our teachers, students and community. Commissioning a mentorship program exhibits our commitment to supporting our teacher's professional growth and it models our dedication to quality teaching and learning.

Beyond the internal social implications related to this policy, the inclusion of teacher leadership, PLCs, and mentorship, creates larger, more global implications related to student

achievement and readiness. PLCs are designed to improve teaching and learning and promote strong and appropriately rigorous instruction (Dufour & Eaker, 2005). Additionally, mentorship and teacher leadership support teacher growth and improved adult learning (Drago-Severson, 2009). Therefore, with improved professional practice students will receive sound and effective instruction, underpinned by curriculum that was created collaboratively and consistently implemented. With improved teaching and learning students will graduate from District ABC prepared for their high school careers and ready for the course work that high schools offer. Improved professional practice will create, for students, a richer educational environment leading to greater student readiness.

Improving our district staff development policy to include professional learning communities, teacher leadership positions and a mentorship program will have significant social implications. The staff development policy will serve to create a greater sense of teacher collaboration, shared purpose, shared responsibility, and a commitment to teaching and learning. Further, this policy will promote greater student learning and readiness. Finally, the policy will also serve to show our teachers, students, and community we are committed to teacher improvement, shared leadership, and collective responsibility.

Political Analysis

A staff development policy which includes teacher leaders, professional learning communities, and a mentoring program has political implications in that the creation of such a policy will insure that teachers become active members of the larger learning community and hold decision making ability. Additionally, such a policy requires funding and adoption, therefore, it insures that the Board of Education play a specific political role in the process.

With teachers taking on active roles as leaders, mentors, and PLC participants, individuals will have decision making responsibilities which hold political significance. PLC teacher-leaders will be working with teams to set norms and commitments. Leaders will guide team culture, motivate, and support. Leaders will also be responsible for setting instructional outcomes, conducting student data analysis meetings, and guiding instructional discussions. Further, PLC leaders will play key roles in working with administration, through the Instructional Leadership Team, in setting instructional goals, developing curriculum and planning for common assessments.

The role of a PLC leader will hold significant decision-making responsibility and may also be cause for political mistrust or question. As PLC leadership becomes part of the operational fabric of District ABC, teachers may have questions as to who should hold PLC leader positions? Why are those leaders chosen? What are the necessary qualifications of the teacher leaders? Are there other extensions of this individual's leadership authority? And, where do the teacher leaders' loyalties lie? As the policy becomes operationalized teachers may be concerned about the hiring process that goes into choosing the PLC leaders. Some teachers may feel there is favoritism for a specific teacher and that may be the reason for their hiring. Teachers may also be inquisitive as to what qualifications one candidate may have over another. To remedy such potential issues, it will be imperative that district leadership make the hiring of PLC leaders transparent and open. It will be necessary to include teachers in the hiring process, have a clear job description, define the necessary qualifications, and ensure that the hiring protocols are consistent and clearly defined.

Additionally, some teachers may question where the loyalty of the PLC leader falls. If a culture of divisiveness exists, teachers may question if the teacher leaders have some specific

loyalty to the administration over the PLC team. Obviously, the hope would be that as an administrative team and a teacher's union we would have a trustful and collaborative culture; however, at times we also recognize that there are difficult and contentious decisions to be made which may separate administrators from teachers. That said, PLCs and teacher leadership are intended to create a culture of cooperation, increased collaboration, and shared leadership; not to create a divisive culture. However, people could potentially question the loyalty of a teacher-leader and take a more divisive stand or view of the teacher leader position.

The mentorship program, like the PLC leadership position, may have similar political implications. Teachers may question who is chosen as a mentor and why. There may be competition among teachers to become mentors and/or there may be a lack of interest in being a mentor. Additionally, a teacher leader could potentially be a mentor to one of their teammates which could lead to additional political implications relating to the perceived authority of the teacher leader, by the mentee. Also, the mentorship program will require mentors and mentees to make significant educational decisions, discuss instruction and learning, and support teacher growth and improvement. These interactions can be challenging and may lead to difficult discussion related to teacher performance and effectiveness. This may also lead to political issues requiring administrative involvement as it relates to evaluation, performance, and teacher employment. Finally, a mentorship program will also rely on funding similar to the teacher leadership positions, therefore, it will also be a political issue as it relates to the Board of Education's approval.

Because the staff development policy includes a need for funding and adoption, it inherently becomes a political issue in that it requires Board of Education approval. The BOE will need to be properly educated to justify the need for the staff development policy prior to the

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approval of funding. Additionally, the BOE may want stated outcomes and progress reports related to the policy, such as higher teacher retention rates, increased student achievement and/or growth, and/or culture and climate survey data. The staff development policy has significant political issues as it requires teachers, the administration and the BOE to all be involved in new decisions around teaching, learning, performance and funding.

Legal Analysis

Developing a staff development policy that includes teacher leadership, professional learning communities, and a mentorship program has minimal legal implications other than the New Teacher Mentorship Induction and Mentoring program mandated in Illinois School Code (ILSC). Illinois School Code Article 21A mandates that public schools provide a new teacher induction program for teachers who hold an Initial Teaching Certificate. The ILSC provides a summary of the program requirements, therefore, it is imperative that our mentoring program provide the following elements: (1) A new teacher must be provided with a mentor for at least 2 school years; (2) The mentor program must align with the Illinois Professional Learning Standards, content area standards, and all local school improvement and professional development plans; (3) The program must support and mentor the new teacher, provide professional learning designed to ensure growth and knowledge, include formative assessments and reflection not used for evaluation, and have defined roles for mentor teachers (Illinois School New Teacher Induction and Mentoring, Code 105 ILCS 5/Art. 21A). The mentoring program, to be included in the District ABC staff development policy, will adhere to the state minimum requirements and ensure that new staff and veteran staff have an opportunity for rich collaboration aimed at improved instructional practices and teacher growth.

Additionally, from a contractual standpoint, all teacher mentors, mentees, and teacher leaders will be stipend and/or paid positions that will be included in the collective bargaining agreement (CBA). Although this may not technically be a legal issue, it does have contractual implications that are worth mentioning. According to the CBA, teachers who perform duties such as mentor, mentee, teacher leader, etc., must be compensated. In sum, although there may not be gradient legal implications for the future staff development policy there are issues that relate to ILSC and the mentoring program, and compensation as it relates to the collective bargaining agreement.

Moral and Ethical Analysis

The District ABC staff development policy will have moral and ethical implications in that it will impact the way in which teachers engage and find meaning and purpose in their work. From an ethical standpoint, I believe in my heart, that it is my job as an educational leader to create environments and conditions that support human growth, give teachers greater life purpose, and support their individual agency. Creating supportive environments that support human autonomy are vital to personal development and professional growth (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This staff development policy is aimed at creating the conditions that support teacher growth through leadership, mentorship, and collaboration. Pink (2009) posits that people are more highly motivated when their work offers them a sense of autonomy, purpose, and mastery. Ryan & Deci (2000) provide a foundation for Pink's (2009) work by submitting that organizations that create environments that nurture autonomy, purpose, and mastery are supporting greater employee engagement, better performance, and higher quality learning.

The primary purpose of the staff development policy is aimed at supporting adult learning through mentorship, collaboration, teaming, and shared leadership. These practices

have been validated to produce greater adult learning (Drago-Severson, 2009; Dufour & Dufour, 2013; Dufour & Eaker, 2005). Therefore, it is my moral and ethical responsibility to provide intentional organizational structures and practices that support environments which lead teachers to greater purpose, deeper engagement, autonomy and mastery. The teacher mentorship program is purposed for providing new teachers the support they need to improve their practice and master their craft. Further, teacher leaders assist in providing PLCs an opportunity to be autonomous in curriculum development while giving each team member the collaborative support to master and improve their instructional practices. PLCs also give teams the opportunity to take responsibility for what and how they teach, allowing teachers a stronger sense of ownership which, in turn, leads to a greater sense of self determination, engagement and reward (Farris-Berg, 2012; Pink, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Creating a staff development policy has strong moral and ethical implications in that it impacts the purpose and meaning of teachers' work and professional lives. It allows teachers to grow professionally and take ownership of their craft. This policy will support teacher autonomy and it will allow teachers the opportunity for collaboration and leadership. Further, this policy solidifies that mentorship, teacher leadership, and PLCs will be embedded into the organizational environment, serving to better ensure that teachers have rich and nurturing working conditions that support purpose, autonomy and mastery. It is my personal ambition to provide such a rich and nurturing environment for adult growth, learning and autonomy, and this policy allows for that to happen in District ABC.

Goals and Values

The staff development policy of District ABC includes three effective pillars of adult learning which include teacher leadership, mentorship and teaming (Drago-Severson, 2009). In this section I will present the goals aligned with each of these pillars, and present research that supports the benefits of each of these pillars provides to staff development.

The goal of District ABC is to adopt the use of PLCs in its staff development policy to create a consistent and viable curriculum. PLCs are teams designed to determine what students ought to learn and how students demonstrate their learning (Dufour & Dufour, 2013). Grade level and content PLCs, otherwise termed as teams, will work together on a weekly, monthly, and yearly basis to create and implement curricula. PLCs will work toward developing a consistent scope and sequence for student learning while working to develop common formative and summative assessments in core curricular areas. Further, teams will work together for better understanding; with each member of the team contributing to the curricular process, the goal of the PLC is to have there be a collective understanding as to what students should be able to understand and produce.

PLCs will also serve to create a greater sense of collaboration. Kanold (2011) notes that teaching is often a very isolated occupation, and in order to combat teachers feeling cut off from one another, District ABC intends to embed PLCs into its staff development policy. PLCs will support sharing of ideas and will give teachers an opportunity to collectively plan and reflect on teaching and learning together. As research supports, the goal is to utilize PLCs to create a better sense of engagement and cultural continuity which support teachers working together for a common purpose, under collective norms, sharing common commitments to instruction,

curricula, and student learning. (Drago-Severson, 2009; Dufour Dufour, 2013; Farris-Berg & Dirkswager, 2012; Kanold, 2011). PLCs also serve the needs and motivations of teachers as they create a sense of shared purpose, collaboration, and autonomy (Farris-Berg & Dirkswager, 2012; Dufour & Dufour, 2013, Kanold, 2011). PLCs within District ABC will be purposed to give teachers an opportunity for collective decision making, ownership in their curricula, and professional growth through collaboration.

In addition to PLCs, the staff development plan will include teacher leadership. The goal of the teacher leadership position is to allow teachers to assume greater responsibility within the district and assist in building the leadership capacity of the staff. With teacher-leaders present in all PLCs, the intention is that teams will operate under collective norms and commitments. PLC teacher leaders will be commissioned to provide greater structure to meetings by utilizing team protocols and agendas. In addition to providing direction to PLCs, team leaders will be utilized to provide motivation, understanding, and build a positive collective culture. Teacher leaders will drive teams toward greater effectiveness, engagement, collaboration, shared purpose, ownership and autonomy (Eaker & Keating, 2008; Farris-Berg, 2012; Kanold, 2011; Katz, Earl, & Jaafar, 2009).

Research is clear that teacher leadership provides teachers with an opportunity to grow and build their leadership capacity within themselves and with other teachers (Dufour & Dufour, 2013, Farris-Berg & Dirkswager, 2012)   From the teacher perspective, providing leadership opportunities enables teachers to share in the decision-making process, take ownership of curriculum, and grow professionally (Dufour & Dufour, 2013; Drago-Severson, 2009).   From the administrative perspective, District ABC wants to support teacher collaboration, ownership, and engagement, through teacher leadership. I am advocating for the teacher leadership position

to provide teachers with avenues for professional growth and ownership of the curricular process. I am seeking to develop this policy to ensure that teachers are given the organizational structures and the opportunities to collaborate, share ideas, build curriculum and lead one another.

The final pillar to be added to the staff development policy is that of a mentoring program designed to support new and developing teachers. The goal of the mentoring program is to provide teachers with a supportive, non-evaluative mentor who can assist in the professional growth of the mentee. Mentorship provides teachers the opportunity to reflect and receive feedback on instruction with freedom from evaluation (Drago-Severson, 2009). Mentorship also enables teachers to explore new methodologies and philosophies while in a safe and supportive environment (Drago-Severson, 2009). Mentorship gives teachers the chance to share instructional methods, promote new ideas, examine assumptions and unravel educational questions (Drago-Severson, 2009).

While mentorship has been validated as valuable to the mentor and the mentee, it is also organizationally beneficial in that it supports greater teacher retention and effectiveness (Drago-Severson, 2009.) One of the challenges that district ABC has faced in recent years is that of teacher turnover; therefore, it is the goal of the District ABC administration to reduce the turnover rate and work to support the growth and proficiency of our new staff. Providing a more supportive mentoring program will contribute to new and developing staff for professional growth, relational connectedness, and a successful teaching experience.

The future staff development policy of ABC includes three pillars which may be seemingly separate from one another, however, each pillar serves to support the overall improvement of each individual teacher and the larger learning community. While a mentoring

program provides individual support to a new and/or developing staff members, the mentees' success will also have an impact on the PLCs in which they are involved. Including effective teachers in each PLC will serve to improve the collective performance of the PLC (Dufour & Dufour, 2013). Dufour & Dufour (2013) posit that PLCs create a sense of reciprocal accountability whereby teachers hold each other accountable for performance. Therefore, the inclusion of well-trained teachers will improve overall team performance. Additionally, well trained-teachers involved in PLC work can create a stronger sense of collaboration and improved practice through the collective development of curriculum and the sharing of instructional ideas (Dufour & Eaker, 2005; Eaker & Keating, 2008). In sum, including a mentorship program will not only help to improve the individual teachers, but will also improve the effectiveness of the PLCs.

While PLCs rely heavily on well-trained, effective team members, they also rely on quality teacher leadership. In accordance with the staff development policy, teachers within District ABC will have opportunities to lead grade level and content level PLCs designed to improve collaboration, engagement, ownership and instructional practice. Eaker & Keating (2008) found that highly effective teacher leaders lead to high quality work and accountability within teams. Consequently, including teacher leadership in the staff development policy will be intended to improve the overall effectiveness of each teacher and teacher leader within the PLCs of District ABC. Overall, the staff development policy is designed to improve the human capital within District ABC by providing new teachers the appropriate supports to be effective contributors to their teacher led PLCs.

Pros

The proposed staff development policy of District ABC includes professional learning communities designed for increased collaboration and adult learning, a mentorship program designed to increase the instructional and professional capacity of new and developing teachers, and teacher leadership positions designed to provide structural leadership to district PLCs while growing the leadership capacity of our teachers. In this section I explore the pros and cons associated with the staff development policy. From the pros side, the policy will promote a collaborative culture, build strong curriculum, increase leadership capacity among staff, and assist in developing and retaining staff.

Including professional learning communities in the staff development policy is intended to create positive change where teachers will able to increase collaboration time, decrease isolation, and develop a consistent and viable curriculum. Drago-Severson (2009) suggests that teams can serve to assist in helping adults learn and grow through collaboration and the sharing of instructional practices. Consequently, PLCs will decrease teacher isolation and open lines of communication encouraging teachers to take shared ownership of curriculum and engage more deeply in quality instructional practice (Drago-Severson, 2009; Dufour & Dufour, 2013). Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky (2009) posit that organizations, such as PLCs, create consistent communication where professionals develop common understandings, utilize same language and develop consistent perspectives. The inclusion of PLCs within the staff development plan is aimed at creating an environment where teachers can have a common understanding of curriculum and are able to provide a challenging educational experience for all learners as intentioned by Dufour & Dufour (2009). Dufour & Eaker (2005) report that PLCs positively

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impact student learning by creating a common curriculum that reflects best practices, provides a clear curricular focus, and monitors student progress. PLCs, as research suggests, positively impact professional collaboration while creating an environment where teachers can develop and implement a consistent and viable curriculum.

In addition to creating a collaborative culture, PLCs positively impact school performance and improvement efforts by creating a sense of shared purpose (Dufour & Eaker, 2005). The collaborative efforts that are included in PLC work serve to create a sense of common purpose and mission where teachers are working together for a collective understanding of teaching and learning (Dufour & Eaker, 2005). Developing a common and/or shared purpose among teachers assists in creating what Dufour & Eaker (2005) refer to as a *critical mass* of teachers i.e., a core group of influential size, who are motivated and driven as change agents of school improvement. While collaboration creates consistent and viable instructional practices, shared purpose will bind teachers together in their efforts toward school improvement (Dufour & Eaker, 2005).

PLCs are designed to create a collaborative culture, shared purpose, and a consistent curriculum, while teacher leadership supports adult learning, builds human and organizational capital, and promotes real changes within a school organization (Drago-Severson, 2009). Supporting teacher leadership contribute to a learning community where teachers take ownership and responsibility of building organizational capacity and school improvement efforts (Drago-Severson, 2009). According to Worley & Lawler (2010), providing shared leadership opportunities creates the positive benefits of providing structural organizational support, spreading power and knowledge across people, and increasing the leadership and managerial skills across the organization, making the organization less dependent on a single leader. As

research suggests, PLCs, and PLC teacher leaders, will positively impact District ABC by creating a collaborative culture, consistent curriculum, and grow human professional capital (Drago-Severson, 2009, Dufour & Eaker, 2005, Dufour & Dufour, 2013, Farris-Berg & Dirkswager, 2012, Worley & Lawler, 2010).

Including a mentorship program within the staff development plan also has positive benefits, as it is intended to build teacher capacity and improve teacher retention rates. Mentorship serves to allow teachers non-evaluative support through practice and reflection in collaboration with a knowledgeable, experienced teacher (Drago-Severson, 2009). Mentorship aids new teachers who are navigating new challenges related to instruction and classroom management (Drago-Severson, 2009). Additionally, mentorship supports teacher collaboration, decreases teacher isolation and helps to support the overall learning community (Drago-Severson, 2009).

Cons

Despite the many benefits of a staff development policy that offers mentorship, PLCs, and teacher leadership, those benefits do come at a cost. Implementing such a staff development policy requires substantial investments in both time and money. As Eaker & Keating (2008) note, teachers must be given the time to work together in PLCs. Teachers need time both inside and outside of the school day to do the necessary work associated with PLC life. Thus, one of the drawbacks of PLCs work requires investments in both time and money. PLC teams need to meet weekly, monthly, and during the summer. Some PLC work will be conducted during the school day while others may be conducted outside of the regular school hours. From a monetary standpoint, the work of PLCs will come at a cost by either paying substitutes to cover classes while PLCs collaborate, or by paying teachers when they work outside the school day or during

the summer. Teachers within District ABC, according to the collective bargaining agreement, must be compensated for such work.

In addition to the financial expense, there is also the cost of instructional time when teachers are meeting during the school day. Although we have well-trained substitutes, our goal is to have the regular teacher provide educational services to students on a consistent basis. Conducting PLC work during the school day, as Eaker & Keating (2008) support, does come at a cost to instructional time provided by the regular education teacher.

While PLC work comes at an expense in both time and money, PLC teacher leadership does as well. PLC leaders, whose roles will require significant investments in time, must be also compensated. PLC leaders will receive training in setting agendas, preparing data, and leading curriculum development, requiring time and compensation. In addition to the cost of compensating our teacher leaders, is the expense of time and additional responsibilities. Although teacher leaders will be appropriately compensated for their time, the work required of a teacher leader does create additional responsibilities added to their workload. Such responsibilities could lead to teachers feeling overworked considering the already high demands upon them from their regular classroom duties. Classroom teachers carry a large responsibility in educating our students and adding a leadership role may be a significant drain on their time and energy.

The mentorship program will also come at a cost in both time and dollars. Mentors provide significant support for new and developing teachers and assist in improving teaching and learning (Drago-Severson, 2009). However, mentorship requires both time and money. Mentors will be compensated for the time it requires to coach, observe, and reflect with new teachers. Additionally, mentees will be compensated for the time it takes to meet and reflect with their

mentors.   Further, mentees will have regular meetings with the Associate Superintendent and principals, outside the contracted work day, which require extra compensation and time.

Much like PLC teacher leadership, mentorship is an added responsibility to both the mentee and the mentor.   Mentorship can add to the already robust workload a teacher experiences.   While mentorship has many positive benefits, it can also be a significant tax on both the time and energy of both the mentor and the mentee; a mentee who may be already overwhelmed by the new responsibilities of teaching.

Further, as mentioned in the political analysis section, the mentorship program, PLCs, and PLC leadership positions, set up an organizational structure that allows for specific authorities and responsibilities; these could potentially lead to political and social mistrust among teachers. Teachers could question the loyalty of the teacher leader or the connection the teacher leader has to the administration. Teachers may also question who is chosen to mentor and why. As mentioned above, mentorship, PLCs, and teacher leadership are designed to create a collaborative culture and not the antithesis, but it needs to be noted that this staff development policy does leave the potential for negative social and political consequences.

There are many research-supported benefits of the proposed staff development policy. Including a mentorship program, PLCs, and teacher leadership positions will serve to increase collaboration, create a more consistent and viable curriculum, develop a shared purpose, distribute leadership and build human capacity (Drago-Severson, 2009; Dufour & Dufour, 2013; Dufour & Eaker, 2005; Eaker & Keating, 2008; Kanold, 2011). While those benefits are certainly valuable, they require significant investments in both time and money and could potentially have negative political and social consequences.

Teacher Leadership and PLC Implementation

The proposed staff development policy of District ABC is an outgrowth of both my

Program Evaluation and Change Plan (Juracka, 2016; Juracka, 2017). In my Program Evaluation

I sought to determine if the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), as explained in detail in the

Program Evaluation and Change Plan, increased employee engagement defined as collaboration,

autonomy, shared purpose, and ownership. Although the ILT did improve teacher engagement,

it became clear that there was also room for organizational improvements. Consequently, my

Change Plan in response to my Program Evaluation, was aimed at creating professional learning

communities with the goal of improving teacher engagement, creating a consistent and viable

curriculum, improving collaboration, decreasing teacher isolation, and improving instructional

practice. I am very proud to write, that as I complete the Policy Implementation section of this

Policy Advocacy Paper, much of the implementation of this policy has materialized over the last

three school years (2015 through 2018). In this section, I will share how I have developed,

implemented, and paid for PLCs, teacher leadership positions, and a mentorship program.

I will begin by explaining how we developed the teacher leader role, provided

professional learning, and provided the resources to support it. In 2015, upon being hired as the

Associate Superintendent of District ABC, I reached out to the building principals for

recommendations for teachers to serve on a new committee which was to be the Instructional

Leadership Team (ILT). In August 2015, the ILT met for the first time and the team included,

among others, one representative from each grade level. The grade-level representatives

informally served as the grade level teacher leaders throughout the 2015-2016 school year as the

ILT developed and grew. Throughout the 2015-2016 school year, the ILT met on several

occasions to collaborate, share ideas, set goals, and focus our efforts on creating a curriculum at each grade level. After ILT meetings, the grade level leaders worked with their grade level teams to develop a scope and sequence for their grade level Language Arts curriculum. In 2015-2016, curricular meetings took place during the school days and during the summer. During the 2015-2016 SY I completed my Program Evaluation (Juracka, 2017) and found that the ILT was creating a greater sense of employee engagement and teachers were appreciative of the collaboration time as they felt a greater sense of ownership, autonomy and shared purpose.

As the 2015-2016 school year ended, I developed an action plan that would allow District ABC to formally support teacher leadership positions and allow for the formal operationalization of PLCs.   In April 2016 the ILT developed a job description for the teacher leadership position which defined the parameters of the work for a teacher leader. The compensation for the teacher leader had not been developed at that time but we eventually established compensation, as discussed below. After the teacher leader job description was developed it was approved by the union and the board of education. The teacher leadership positions were then posted as vacancies in the summer of 2016 and interviews were conducted to fill those positions. Interviews were conducted by the principals and me. All but two teacher leaders who served on the ILT in 2015-2016 applied to serve as the teacher leaders for the 2016-2017 SY. In the two situations where the 2015-2016 teacher leader did not apply, we interviewed grade level candidates who were interested in the role and hired the individuals best suited for the role according to talent and experience.

As the 2016-2017 school year began, the teacher leader position was formally in place and leaders were compensated for the role. Although there was no specific dollar amount decided for the role as the year began, compensation was to be determined. As a result, we

developed a stipend document which required teacher leaders to document the hours they spent

conducting teacher leadership responsibilities. At the end of the 2016-2017 SY, the District

ABC administrative team examined the documented hours and worked with the teacher leaders

to agree upon a $2100.00 stipend for the teacher leadership role.

The 2016-2017 SY also included significant improvement and implementation of PLCs

using the teacher leaders. As my Program Evaluation (Juracka, 2017) concluded, it was apparent

that grade level teams, despite the improved sense of employee engagement, needed professional

development associated with the work of professional learning communities. Consequently, my

Change Plan (Juracka, 2016) focused on improving professional practice through our grade level

PLCs. In 2016-2017 my Change Plan came to life as teacher leaders were trained, during ILT

meetings, in developing norms and commitments, setting agendas, harnessing reflective

practices, and utilizing data meeting protocols.

Securing teacher leadership positions was the focus during the 2015-2016 SY; during the

2016-2017 SY, the focus was on professional development for teacher leaders, and development

of professional behaviors within our district PLCs. During 2016-2017 SY, I also had to make

changes to the yearly calendar to support PLC meeting times and dates. After the 2016-2017 SY

concluded, it was apparent that we needed to build PLC collaboration time into the calendar.

Grade level teams were meeting during the school day, four times a year, for full-day curricular

collaboration and two days during the summer months. Curricular collaboration days required

many substitutes and pulling teachers out of the classroom too often was not ideal. Therefore,

the District ABC administrative team decided to implement late starts once per month and half

days four times per year. Hence, the 2017-2018 calendar included one 90 minute late-start each

month and a half day every other month for PLC work.

In addition to creating a calendar that now supported the work of PLCs and teacher leadership, in 2016-2017, I directed principals to create master schedules that allowed for weekly common plan times. Starting in the 2016-2017 SY, principals developed master schedules that allowed each grade level PLC to meet once a week for common curricular planning. Now when principals and I attend weekly meetings, they are run by well-trained teacher leaders; meetings are fun, engaging, educationally focused and agenda-driven.

Below is a timeline of activities that led to the implementation of teacher leadership and PLCs.

Figure 1 Mentorship Program Timeline

Date	Actions
August of 2015	Instructional Leadership Team meets for the first time. Grade Level leaders are informally established.
April of 2016	Teacher Leadership Job Description is created and Teacher Leadership positions are posted for hire.
Summer of 2016	Grade Level PLC Teacher Leaders are formally positioned and compensation begins to be developed through documentation.
2016-2017 SY	Professional Development: PLC Teacher Leaders receive formal leadership training through the ILT, focused on norms, agendas, team building, data meeting protocols, reflection protocols.
2016-2017 SY	Principals create master schedules allowing grade level weekly common plan time.
April 2017	Calendar approved for monthly 90 minutes late starts and 4 half days.
End of 2016-2017	Grade Level Teacher Leader stipend is finalized at $2100.00

The District ABC mentorship program, while mandated by state law, required significant planning and implementation. The primary purpose in supporting a mentorship program is to

provide new and developing teachers an environment that supports their professional growth and learning. In doing so, the primary challenge was developing learning experiences that were most valuable for new and developing staff that did not require an over taxation of their time and resources.

In 2015-2016 I implemented a mentoring program that left much room for improvement and provided little time for coaching and reflection. After year one, I conducted an informal focus group meeting with the mentees and mentors and asked them for their ideas for improving the mentoring program. After receiving feedback and evaluating the program, I worked with mentees and mentors to create the following program calendar.

Figure 2 Mentorship Program Calendar

Mentorship Program Calendar	
Dates	**Activities**
August 8th	New Teacher Induction 9:00 am to 3:00 pm
August 9th	New Teacher Meeting 9:00 am to 1:00 pm ● Danielson: Classroom Environment ● 12:00 Lunch with Mentor: Mentor/Mentee Roles
September 12th	New Teacher Meeting 3:30 - 4:30 at DO Room 53 ● First Impressions ● October Peer Observation Protocol ● Danielson: Learning Goals
By Sept 30	1st Mentor/Mentee Cognitive Observation ● Time/Date Location TBD by Mentor and Mentee ● 20-30 Minute Observation ● Pre-Conference/Observation/Post-Conference ● Follow TEP Pre Observation Protocol.
October:	Peer Observation: ● Mentee observes lessons from Principal selected peers ● Targeted Area Post Conference: Follow Peer Observation Protocol
October 10th	New Teacher Meeting 3:30 - 4:30 at DO Room 53 ● Student Target Portfolios ● Parent Teacher Conferences

	● Danielson: Engagement Strategies
By Dec 15th	Mentor/Mentee 1st Semester Meeting ● Mentor/Mentee Debrief and focus on support opportunities
January 16th	New Teacher Meeting 3:30 - 4:30 at DO Room 53 ● 1st Semester Debrief ● Danielson: Using Assessments
February 13th	New Teacher Meeting 3:30 - 4:30 at DO Room 53 ● Needs Assessment ● Danielson: Conducting Practicing and Deepening Lessons
By March 15th	2nd Mentor/Mentee Cognitive Observation ● Time/Date Location TBD by Mentor and Mentee ● 20-30 Minute Observation ● Pre-Conference/Observation/Post-Conference ● Follow TEP Pre Observation Protocol.

The program calendar was an outgrowth of the feedback I received from the 2015-2016 mentorship participants. The program calendar includes a teacher induction program for new staff which takes place prior to the opening of school. During the induction new teachers are provided the basic information about the district i.e. goals, mission, vision, and then provided all the basic logistic information for the systems we use i.e., powerschool, google suite, skyward, etc. During induction the human resources department also covers all the basic health and benefits information. We also take new teachers on a bus tour of the district and let new staff observe where their students are coming from and where they live. To support cultural competencies we ensure that our teachers understand and get an opportunity to observe the economic backgrounds of our children.

In addition to the induction program, our new staff meet with me, the Associate Superintendent, four times per year to serve as a check-in and also cover the four domains of Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching (2011). During these meetings I gather feedback

from new teachers as to their professional progress, their challenges, and input on how I can provide support. Also, I work with new teachers to dig into the Danielson Framework for Teaching (2011) to provide professional learning for new teachers and support their growth in professional practice.

Beyond the new teacher induction date and the four yearly individual meetings, I also have new and developing teachers work with a mentor who provides cognitive coaching experiences. Each new or developing teacher has opportunities to be observed by their mentor and is provided feedback on their instruction in a non-evaluative manner. Mentors and mentees conduct pre-observation conferences to discuss lesson goals and objectives, student needs, and outline instructional methods. Next, mentors observe mentees and provide non-evaluative feedback during the post-observation conference where they reflect on the strengths and areas of growth that where observed during the lesson.

In addition to cognitive coaching, I also arrange a peer observation month (Figure 2) when new teachers can observe their peers as models for teaching. The principals work with new and developing teachers and assign them to observe those teachers with strengths that can assist their specific needs. For example, if a new staff member is struggling with classroom management the principal might assign the mentee to observe a teacher who has exceptional classroom routines. After each peer observation new teachers work with mentors to discuss their observations and how they can grow from the observation.

The mentor/mentee luncheon which takes place the day after the induction program. The mentor/mentee luncheon provides mentors and mentees a chance to meet and develop a relationship. The luncheon gives us an opportunity to cover the Mentorship Program roles and

responsibilities, review the program calendar, establish expectations, and answer any questions mentors/mentees may have.

The mentorship program, along with teacher leaders, and PLCs, are all designed for adult learning as supported by Drago-Severson (2009). The District ABC staff development policy, therefore, is being designed to ensure that these structures are solidified in board policy and provide a consistent foundation for adult learning in the future.

POLICY ASSESSMENT

The proposed staff development policy which includes a mentorship program, professional learning communities, and teacher leadership positions, will require an evaluation process that individually assess the goals and outcomes of each specific element. In this section, I will discuss the assessment plan that aligns to each element of the policy by reviewing the goals and objectives of each policy element, and the associated assessment tools.

Mentorship Program

The mentorship program is designed to support new and developing teachers in their professional practice. The program also seeks to improve teacher retention rates and provide new and developing teachers with an opportunity to reflect on their professional practice in a non-evaluative manner. In meeting these goals, the assessment plan will evaluate new teacher effectiveness and new teacher retention rates, and gather qualitative survey data from new and developing staff on the effectiveness of the mentorship program.

Principals will ultimately be responsible for evaluating new and developing staff. Principals will measure teacher effectiveness against the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT) (2011), which District ABC utilizes in its Teacher Evaluation Plan (TEP), to evaluate staff. If the mentorship program is effective, mentee teachers should be growing in their professional practice. Evidence gathered through administrative evaluations will validate teacher effectiveness and professional growth. Principals and mentees will be given opportunities to reflect on teacher practice and discuss teacher strengths and areas of improvement. The TEP, which was adopted by District ABC, will serve as an instrument in the measurement of the effectiveness of the mentorship program.

In addition to the TEP, the mentorship program will be evaluated by examining retention rates related to resignations and dismissals of new and developing staff. In the 2016-2017 school year, District ABC had several resignations and dismissals of new and developing staff. The district goal is to increase the retention rate by providing strong support to new and developing staff through the mentorship program. It should be noted, however, that although the mentorship program seeks to support new and developing staff, the mentorship program is not the only variable in teacher retention rates. Other factors, such as hiring practices, timeliness of hires, and teacher shortages, also play a significant role in teacher retention.

The mentorship program will also be assessed qualitatively through focus group feedback. In the 2016-2017 SY, I worked with the mentors and mentees by convening a focus group at the end of the school year to gather information as to what was working and what needed to be improved within the mentorship program. After gathering feedback from mentors and mentees, the mentorship program calendar (See Figure 2) was developed to improve the professional learning experiences for mentees. We will continue the practice of utilizing focus groups to gather improvement data as we seek to continuously improve our mentorship program and provide more effective learning experiences for our teachers.

Professional Learning Communities.

Much like the mentorship program, professional learning communities and the teacher leaders who lead them, will be measured in accordance with their purpose, goals, and outcomes. Professional learning communities were an outgrowth of my program evaluation which sought to improve employee engagement as defined by shared purpose, ownership, autonomy, and collaboration. PLCs, therefore, are an organizational structure, which not only serve to improve employee engagement, but were designed to produce a consistent and viable curriculum, increase

teacher collaboration, and improve professional practice. One assessment method designed to gauge the effectiveness of our grade level PLCs, will be to redeploy the ILT Engagement Survey (Juracka, 2016) used within my program evaluation. The ILT Engagement Survey was specifically designed to measure if teachers were gaining a greater sense of autonomy, collaboration, shared purpose, and ownership from working with their grade level teams. As PLCs have grown and become more effective in District ABC, the ILT Engagement survey will continue to be relevant as it seeks to measure employee engagement which was one of the main objectives in developing PLCs.

Further, PLCs and teacher leaders will be assessed in accordance with the products they produce. Effective PLCs are designed to create a consistent and viable curriculum. Teacher leaders, who are concurrently members of the ILT, are also trained through the ILT to develop grade level curricular roadmaps, common assessments, and shared instructional activities. Curricular templates have been created and designed by the ILT. The ILT sets the curricular goals and timelines, and the teacher leaders, along with their grade level PLCs, coordinate the completion of their curricular goals. Meeting the curricular goals of the ILT, and adhering to deadlines, will serve as a gauge for PLC and teacher leadership effectiveness.

In addition to meeting the curricular development goals of the ILT, PLC effectiveness can be assessed using student academic data. With PLCs developing consistent curricula, student data can be utilized to assess curricula and determine if gaps or omissions are present within the curricula. Additionally, student academic data may support the need to strengthen or enrich an area of the curriculum as well. Student performance data can be powerful in determining if the work of the PLCs is meeting the intended curricular targets.

Beyond creating a greater sense of employee engagement and creating consistent and viable curriculum, teacher leaders will also be measured against the job description created for the role. In brief, the job description outlines the role of a PLC leader as it relates to curriculum development, agenda setting, team building, and data analysis. Therefore, PLC leaders will be professionally assessed during the meetings they conduct. Grade Level PLCs are required to have agendas and team building activities. The principals and I attend grade level PLCs regularly to observe and evaluate team meetings. We provide feedback to PLC teacher leaders, offer suggestions, and celebrate their successes. Teacher leaders receive ongoing assessment, support, and feedback through me and the principals.

The Instructional Leadership Team meetings, which serve to coordinate all grade level PLCs, and include all grade level teacher leaders, offers time for collective feedback, collaboration, reflection, refinement, and problems solving. The ILT provides direction for all grade level leaders and grade level PLCs to ensure each team is meeting their curricular goals and objectives. The ILT serves to as a rudder to steer all grade level leaders and PLCs, and as a mirror for reflective feedback, examination of practice and a catalyst for improvement.

The PLCs and teacher leadership will also be assessed through our yearly reflection protocols described in the Changed Plan (Juracka, 2017). The ILT and the grade level PLC leaders are well trained in the use of the Continue-Start-Stop protocol as developed by the retrospectives training organization, Retrium. (www.retrium.com/resources/techniques/start-stop-continue). The teacher leaders will assess the work they are doing each year by asking teams what is working well, or what they should *continue* doing. Teacher leaders, along with their PLCs, will also ask themselves what they are not doing, and what they should *start* doing as teams and as leaders. Finally, teacher leaders will ask what we should *stop* doing. This simple

protocol serves to open up the lines of communication among teachers and administrators and creates a starting point for how the ILT, teacher leaders, and PLCs can grow and improve.

In sum, the proposed staff development policy ,which is designed to solidify, in practice, the use of PLCs, teacher leaders and mentorship, will be assessed in many forms. The mentorship program will be measured using the Teacher Evaluation Plan, examining retention rates, and using focus group feedback. District ABC PLCs and teacher leaders will be measured against the curricular outcomes they produce, student performance data, and the quality of their PLC meetings. Additionally, teacher leaders will be assessed according to the teacher leader job description and the responsibilities which encompass the role. Finally, the ILT, grade level PLCs, and teacher leaders, and I, will utilize the continue-start-stop protocol as a tool for continuous reflection, renewal, professional growth and improvement.

Figure 3 Program Assessment

Staff Development Component	Assessment
Mentorship Program	● Teacher Evaluation Plan utilizing the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching ● New teacher retention rates ● New teacher focus group feedback
Professional Learning Communities	● ILT Engagement Survey ● Creation and completion of curricular roadmaps, learning frameworks and common assessments ● Student assessment data
Teacher Leadership of PLCs	● Observations: Evaluation and feedback by principals and associate superintendent ● ILT meetings offer time for feedback, reflection, and improvement ● Continue - Start - Stop reflection and renewal protocol

SUMMARY IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed District ABC staff development policy is intended to provide effective adult learning experiences that will support teacher growth and development through teacher leadership, professional learning communities, and mentorship. By creating opportunities for teachers to share in distributive leadership and by offering teacher leadership positions, the policy provides teachers with the opportunity to take ownership of their craft and engage more deeply in their roles as educators (Drago-Severson, 2009; Farris-Berg & Dirkswager, 2012; Kanold, 2011). Teacher leaders will solidify team culture through the development of team and organizational norms and ensure professional behaviors and commitments are established. (Dufour & Dufour, 2013; Dufour & Eaker, 2005). Further, creating teacher leadership positions will cultivate the growth of human capital and teacher capacity, which will benefit not only teachers themselves, but the students and the district as a whole (Kanold, 2011).

While teacher leadership fosters the growth of teachers and supports a collaborative culture, District ABC professional learning communities will create a culture of reciprocal accountability, ownership, shared purpose, and autonomy (Dufour & Dufour, 2013; Dufour & Eaker, 2005; Farris-Berg & Dirkswager, 2012) . District ABC PLCs will give teachers an opportunity to delve deeply into the curricular development process to understand their curriculum more completely (Drago-Severson, 2009; Dufour & Dufour, 2013; Farris-Berg & Dirkswager, 2012). PLCs will decrease teacher isolation and provide teachers with opportunities to share ideas, decisions, and practices (Drago-Severson, 2009; Dufour & Dufour, 2013; Farris-Berg & Dirkswager, 2012). Further, PLC work will allow for the creation of a consistent and viable curriculum that supports common learning experiences, assessment and data analysis (Dufour & Eaker, 2005).

The District ABC Mentorship Program is intended to support adult learning and growth. Research finds that a mentoring program can assist in retaining new and developing teachers by providing them with support from trained, experienced teachers (Drago-Severson, 2009). Mentors can support new teachers by assisting them in managing new challenges around classroom management and student learning using observation and reflective conversations (Drago-Severson, 2009). Further, a mentorship program will assist the administration in the support and growth of new staff, aid in decreasing isolation, support reflective practices, and develop effective collaboration (Drago-Severson, 2009).

The District ABC staff development policy is aimed at solidifying, in board policy, the effective adult learning pillars, as supported by Drago-Severson (2009), of mentorship, teaming, and teacher leadership. In providing these adult learning experiences, I intend to provide an environment for teachers that supports their professional growth and engagement in their work. My intention is for these pillars work to support teachers on their educational journeys by creating a workplace that cultivates a collaborative culture, where teachers support and care for one another, through mentorship, collaboration and leadership, for the purpose of creating quality teaching and learning for our children.

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