4-2019

A Program Evaluation of Professional Learning Communities to Support Professional Development and Student Learning

Tiffany Scott
National Louis University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/diss

Part of the Elementary Education and Teaching Commons, and the Other Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/diss/349
A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES TO SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND STUDENT LEARNING

Tiffany Scott
Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Doctor of Education in the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National College of Education
National Louis University
April 2019
A DISSERTATION:

A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES TO SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND STUDENT LEARNING

Tiffany Scott

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Approved:

Chair, Dissertation Committee

Member, Dissertation Committee

Dean's Representative

Dean, National College of Education

Date Approved: 12-8-15
Copyright by Tiffany Scott, 2019

All rights reserved
NLU Digital Commons Document Origination Statement

This document was created for the 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 a major project within their school or district that relates to professional practice. The three foci of the project are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership
- Policy Advocacy

For the **Program Evaluation** focus, 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** focus, 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, and have 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** focus, 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).

**Works Cited**


4.21.16
ABSTRACT

For this program evaluation, I examined the effectiveness of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) with regard to how it supported professional development for teachers and student learning at Sunshine Elementary School (pseudonym). The literature reviewed argues that PLCs are viable venues to develop teacher competencies as well as improve student-learning outcomes when implemented with fidelity. The methods in this study included surveys and interviews from teachers, coaches and administrators. There was also a review of the student achievement data to examine results against the perceptions of the study participants. The results indicated areas that were working well, and areas that were not. In conclusion, the school needs to incorporate best practices to align with the research so that it may fully meet its goals.
PREFACE

I have been an educator in a district for the last nine years. I have served as a teacher, coach, and now most recently an administrator. During my sixth year of teaching, I had the most gratifying experience within my Professional Learning Community (PLC). I grew tremendously as a professional, increased student achievement as a grade level like never before, and felt a strong sense of collegiality because of my PLC experiences. I knew then that I wanted to recreate this experience for all educators, but I would start on my campus.

Therefore, when it was time to select a dissertation project, it was a no brainer. I would evaluate the effectiveness of the current PLCs at Sunshine Elementary School (SES) and utilize those findings in conjunction with research to enhance professional development for teachers and improve student learning. The excitement grew when I realized that I would be able to apply the research and actually impart change with the results of the program evaluation. This factor made this project valuable not only to me, but also to all the stakeholders at SES and Sunshine School District.

The leadership lessons that I have been able to take away as a result of this program evaluation have been relevant and timely. I have learned that as a school leader, my influence with regard to PLCs extends far beyond establishing structures. Transformational leaders provide solid foundations for success in part by establishing a clear vision grounded in expectations and roles. This foundation is not established at a faculty meeting or a professional development session, although it may start there. This foundation is established by repeatedly, optimistically, and consistently reiterating the vision by aligning resources and providing ongoing support.
These leadership lessons have begun to shift my practice in new ways. I am now intentional about supporting this work because I know that this is a viable path to improving teacher quality and improving learning outcomes for all students. I have completely changed the scheduling of my school day to reflect this priority and serve as an active member of PLCs at SES. Using the results from this study, we have reorganized administrator assignments to increase our presence within PLCs and effectively monitor transfer.

In addition, I am deliberate about being mentally present within PLCs because I want to convey the value of PLCs in my actions and be a part of something great. I do believe that when you invest your time, effort and resources into something you believe in, the return is gratifying. This process is no different. Creating optimal learning conditions for teachers and students is within reach and we are on our way to seeing it through.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although worthwhile, completing this process has been a long journey, but it would not have been possible without the support of Dr. Carol A. Burg. She has coached me, encouraged me, challenged me, and admonished me when needed. Somehow you were able to provide me with the support I needed while requiring the highest standard. Thank you for caring, investing in my professional growth and seeing the potential in me when I could not. I am convinced that God strategically aligned our paths, and I am forever grateful.

Dr. Daniel C. Buckman, Dr. Susan Moxley, Dr. Dale E. Moxley, and Dr. Jim Schott, thank you for your respect, professionalism, and wisdom. Each of you used your field experience to help cohort TA005 push their practice and grow as professionals within the field of education. I am honored to have learned from each of you. For me, you along with Dr. Carol A. Burg are the reason National Louis University is set apart.

Cohort TA005 has been a support since the day I began this program. Thank you for the emails, the texts, encouragement, knowledge, and feedback. With a support system like you, the sky truly is the limit.

Thank you to my family for always supporting me with your time, prayers, words, and gifts. I am especially grateful for my husband, Frank Scott Jr. and my two beautiful children. Your words of encouragement, numerous sacrifices and physical presence has meant more to me than I can ever express. Thank you for never complaining about the time spent away from you, even though I know it was hard at times.

Finally, to Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, thank you! You are the great I AM!
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my two children, Frank Charles Keanan Scott III and to Somiya Rae Scott. To me this project represents the values that your grandfather, Larry Jerome Smith, instilled in me – “good better best, you never let it rest until your good becomes better and your better becomes your best.” Allow this work to encourage your work ethic, and make an effort to leave the world a better place than you inherited it. Be of service to others and let your light so shine.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................................... i
PREFACE ............................................................................................................................................... ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .................................................................................................................. iv
DEDICATION .......................................................................................................................................... v
LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................................... x
FIGURES ................................................................................................................................................ xi

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................... 12
   Purpose of the Program Evaluation ............................................................................................ 15
   Rationale .............................................................................................................................................. 17
   Goals of the Program Evaluation ................................................................................................. 19
   Exploratory Questions .................................................................................................................... 20
   Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................... 22

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE ....................................................................................... 23
   Introduction ....................................................................................................................................... 23
   Professional Learning Communities ............................................................................................. 23
   Focus on learning. .............................................................................................................................. 24
   Collaborative culture and collective responsibility. .................................................................... 25
   Results orientation ............................................................................................................................ 26
   Benefits of a Professional Learning Community ........................................................................ 27
   Professional development ................................................................................................................ 27
   Leadership capacity. ........................................................................................................................ 28
   Collegiality and collective efficacy. ................................................................................................. 29
   Student achievement....................................................................................................................... 30
   Challenges of a Professional Learning Community ................................................................. 31
   Implementation.................................................................................................................................. 31
   Establish a clear purpose. ............................................................................................................... 32
   Buy-in ................................................................................................................................................ 32
   Navigating conflict. .......................................................................................................................... 33
   Definition of Terms.......................................................................................................................... 34
   Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................... 35
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY ......................................................... 36
  Research Design Overview .......................................................... 36
  Participants .................................................................................. 37
  Data Gathering Techniques ............................................................ 38
  Surveys ......................................................................................... 39
  Interviews ...................................................................................... 41
  Student achievement data .............................................................. 43
  Ethical Considerations ................................................................. 43
  Data Analysis Techniques ............................................................... 45
  Surveys ......................................................................................... 45
  Interviews ...................................................................................... 46
  Student achievement data .............................................................. 47
  Conclusion ................................................................................... 48

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS .................................................................. 49
  Findings ......................................................................................... 49
  Teacher surveys ............................................................................ 50
  Instructional coach surveys ............................................................ 64
  Administrator surveys ................................................................. 74
  Interviews ...................................................................................... 87
  Student achievement data .............................................................. 100
  Organizational Changes ............................................................... 103
  Contexts ....................................................................................... 107
  Culture .......................................................................................... 108
  Conditions .................................................................................... 109
  Competencies ............................................................................... 110
  Interpretation ................................................................................ 114
  Judgments ..................................................................................... 117
  Recommendations ....................................................................... 120

CHAPTER FIVE: TO-BE FRAMEWORK .................................................. 122
  Introduction .................................................................................. 122
  Review of Literature Related to Change ........................................ 123
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson study.</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits.</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture and lesson study.</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers as reflective learners</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envisioning the Success TO-BE</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contexts</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions.</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture.</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competencies.</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER SIX: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies and Actions</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER SEVEN: IMPLICATIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Statement</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of Needs</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational analysis</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic analysis</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social analysis</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political analysis</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal analysis</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral and ethical analysis</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Staff and Community Relationships</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Tables 1-18: Teacher Survey Question Results.................................................. 50 - 64

Tables 19-34: Coach Survey Question Results..................................................... 65 - 74

Table 35- 52: Administrator Survey Question Results........................................ 74 - 86

Tables 53-73: Teacher, Coach, Administrative Interview Question Results.......... 87 - 100
FIGURES

Figure 1: SES Overall Student Performance Data...................................................... 102

Figure 2: SES Proficiency Comparison by Grade Level................................................. 103
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

According to Allison & Schumaker (2011), change demands that school leaders think about the system, mission, and its design. When I think about the systems at Sunshine Elementary School (SES), it all comes back to student achievement. At SES, we believe that we are in the business of providing every child with a quality education, and in order to do that, we must provide quality education to every student, every day, in every class. Wagner, Kegan, Lahey, Lemons, Garnier, Heising, Howell, and Rasmussen (2006) states that, “instruction must be the central aim of any education improvement effort” (Location 983). Therefore, we are looking at how we can change or improve the quality of education for each student. Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (2011) require teachers to have a growth mindset. It outlines the teacher’s responsibility to learn continuously which is evident by reflection, collaboration with colleagues, and ongoing professional development (FEAPS, 2011). SES intends to foster this standard in a sustainable effort.

SES is not alone in the struggle to improve the quality of education. Since the institution of education was established, schools have tried to improve, and many do. I believe that we have the real potential to improve because we know that a quality education means quality instruction. Wagner et al. (2006) theory is that “student achievement will not improve unless and until we create schools and districts where all educators are learning how to significantly improve their skills as teachers and instructional leaders” (Location 983). Our vision is to build a collaborative culture through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) where teachers continuously grow,
improve their instruction and take ownership in their learning in a manner that leads to
greater student achievement.

To provide a more descriptive picture of the larger learning community at SES, here is some statistical information from Florida Continuous Improvement Model System (2017). At SES, we serve students from Pre-Kindergarten to Fifth Grade. We are a Title I school located in the heart of Sunshine, Florida with a population of approximately 750 students. Of these students, 91% receive free or reduced lunch, 69% are minorities and 38% receive educational support under Exceptional Student Education (ESE). For the last three years, we have maintained a school grade of a “C” after coming from an “F” status during the 2013-2014 school year. However, this current school year, 2017-2018, we have fallen to a “D”. Three elementary schools serve the city of Sunny Hills, Florida. However, SES is one of the two Title I schools in this area.

The community is culturally diverse and continuously growing. The school itself has garnered lots of community support to combat the challenges faced by economically disadvantaged families. This support comes in the form of funding educational trips, incentives, mentors, food, toiletries, laundry services, school supplies, and books. Community support combined with the new building renovations, has helped to restore school pride for the students and community at large. The community support has had a tremendous impact on student learning and has helped the school leadership begin building a consistent staff as well as a community of learners among students and staff.

Over the past several years, the school leadership has worked hard to build a community of learners among the teachers at SES. As a Title I School, SES is staffed with additional support in the form of personnel, as compared to other schools who are
similar in size. During the 2017-2018 school year, it had three administrators and three instructional coaches to help support its community of learners. This support combined with having been a Differentiated Accountability (DA) school, has created certain norms. A DA school is a school that is closely monitored and supported by the state in implementing its school improvement goals until the school reaches a school grade of a “C”, after being an “F”, for a period of 3 years or more (FCIM, 2017). The purpose is to improve the learning conditions of the school and to provide a high quality of learning for all students (FCIM, 2017).

One of those norms established as a DA school at SES consists of teachers engaging in PLCs that instructional coaches facilitate at least two times a week, where teachers receive the lessons and materials for the upcoming week. Teachers were required to execute lessons as determined by the instructional coaches. The administrators who sat in the PLCs, as well as district and state teams monitored these lessons and provided frequent feedback. Much of the leadership and staff who engaged in this process remain at SES. Although this design is no longer required by the state, staff are accustomed to engaging in PLCs where teachers receive lessons from the coaches, and thus the model continues.

Unfortunately, I believe that this model, while beneficial for a short time, has stifled progress. SES has been a “C” for three consecutive years and has fallen to a “D” status for the 2017-2018 school year. The problem is that overall teachers are not developing their skill-set, building their competence, or executing lessons to the full intent of their design because they are not doing the cognitive lift required to execute the lesson according to the full intent of the lesson design. The current PLC structure does
not provide time for teachers to look at student work and use it formatively to adjust instructions. Ultimately, this means that students are not consistently learning under the best possible conditions and teachers are not learning from reflecting on their instruction. Thus, there is room for improvement and I would like to evaluate the PLC process at SES to determine how we can best improve the learning conditions for both teachers and students alike.

**Purpose of the Program Evaluation**

Currently, SES is equipped with a very competent set of instructional coaches who lead PLCs for all teachers. Teachers meet a minimum of two times a week for 45 minutes per session for the purposes of lesson planning. Teachers are in a PLC with other teachers who teach the same content and grade level, an instructional coach, and an administrator when possible. The instructional coach prepares an agenda for most sessions and facilitates the planning session. Coaches typically come prepared with a rough draft of lesson plans, student tasks based on the current standards, and resources to support the lessons. The 45 minutes is for the coach to go through the items and to make any adjustments based on the teacher’s recommendations.

The problem with this model is that the teachers are not improving their skill-set or taking full ownership of the lessons because they are not developing those lessons. Lack of ownership in the lesson appears to be affecting the quality of instruction. The instructional coaches do the “heavy lifting” because they are the ones who are analyzing standards, finding resources, designing instructional sequences and developing student tasks. There are times when teachers engage in the “heavy lifting”, but too often, it is in isolation, inconsistent and devoid of depth and focus. Conversely, teachers are required
by professional standards to plan, implement, and evaluate effective instruction in a variety of learning environments (FEAPS, 2011). Therefore, we need to change our existing structures to reflect the standards of the profession and produce desirable student outcomes.

This problem calls for change because it is preventing SES from building capacity among all teachers and causing teachers to become dependent on instructional coaches for lessons. I became acutely aware of the problem by participating in weekly PLCs. We want SES to embody a collaborative culture rather than dependence. This will mean creating a culture where it is the norm to solve problems through collaboration and for teachers to reflect on their practice (Wagner et al., 2006). Applying this change could empower teachers by further developing their skill-sets, increasing their level of commitment to the school by appealing to their intrinsic motivation, and improve the quality of instruction and student tasks that will eventually lead to an improvement in student achievement for all students.

In the end, the aim of this program evaluation is to improve the effectiveness of professional learning communities for the purpose of building capacity, increasing competence among teachers, and improving the learning conditions for all students, which will lead to an increase in student achievement. Furthermore, I would like to take the findings from this evaluation and use it to improve the existing PLCs and create systems that will lead to long-term sustainability around the professional growth of teachers and student achievement. According to Eleanor Dougherty (2012) it is relatively easy for one to surmise that weak instructional experiences lead to weak outcomes and widens the achievement gap (Dougherty, 2012). At SES, we want to close the
achievement gaps and produce learning conditions that result in authentic learning. Well-crafted assignments and effective instructional experiences can help us make this transformation (Dougherty, 2012). I believe that implementing an effective PLC model will help us reach that goal.

**Rationale**

The reason that I have selected this problem as the focus of my change plan is because I believe that it is a change that can have a profound impact on teacher quality and student achievement. According to Miles & Frank (2008), “the quality of teaching trumps any other factor in predicting improved student performance” (Location 351). If this is true, as I believe it to be, then as an administrator at SES, I have a responsibility to the students to help the teachers improve their practice. PLCs are the most consistent vehicle for which I am able to do that.

As a former teacher and instructional coach, I had the ability to engage in an initiative that was designed to improve student achievement by improving collaborative learning through PLCs. This experience showed me first-hand how quality PLCs can have a profound impact on teacher development and student performance. Howbeit uncomfortable, in my experience each teacher who participated in the process demonstrated major growth in the number of students demonstrating proficiency on state assessment as compared to the previous year. Additionally, teachers frequently mentioned how much they learned from their colleagues during this time. I attribute this success to improving the quality of PLCs. I would like to reproduce this success and feeling of empowerment at SES where I now serve as an administrator.
Bambrick-Santoyo (2010) contends that “PLCs can offer significant benefits, but only if they are significantly focused on analyzing student learning and identifying key action steps based on that analysis” (Location 508). Establishing PLCs that will take on this sort of focus will begin to create the needed changes, but it must be focused and intentionally structured as a system. Wagner et al. (2006) further adds to this point by identifying seven disciplines for strengthening instruction to include a sense of urgency using data, a shared vision of good teaching, a shared vision of student results, meetings about the work, effective supervision, professional development, and diagnostic data with accountable collaboration. Together these elements create the condition for improving instruction and instructional leadership. Every PLC at SES needs to incorporate these elements to create and sustain quality instruction that will increase student achievement for all students.

If SES continues to operate in its current state, this will create vulnerabilities that threaten long-term success for all its stakeholders. For example, let us say we lost one of our instructional coaches and were unable to employ someone of equal caliber, the quality of instruction and student task would deteriorate in this area because we failed to develop others at the school. This change would adversely affect teachers, students, parents and the school at large, encompassing all stakeholders. Therefore, it is necessary to change our current PLC structure to meet the needs of our students and teachers, as well as plan for the future.

For that reason alone, change is obviously important for the school, but this change is also important for the community at large. The students who are affected by this change reside in the community along with their parents. The parents of these
students want to ensure their children are equipped with highly competent teachers who are helping their students prepare for the next grade and life. Also, having a quality school in your community, increases property value and appeals to the allure of the community.

Additionally, improving the conditions of PLCs influences the district as a whole. If we are able to get this model right in one of the lowest performing schools in the district, then this model can be used to recreate success in other schools, district-wide. If we are unable to get this model right, it says that not only has the school failed to provide students with the quality learning experiences and adequately support teacher development, but so has the district. The benefits of improving quality instruction and student achievement are residual and hemorrhages into every aspect of a school community, even more cause to get this component right.

Goals of the Program Evaluation

There are three intended goals of the change plan. The first intended goal of the change plan is to have teachers take more ownership during the PLC process, which will lead to a more active role during PLCs by analyzing standards and student work, finding resources, designing instructional sequences and developing student tasks. This type of PLC will allow teaching and analysis to be paired and will provide better student outcomes. “Teachers must first analyze their own classes’ data; only when teachers feel that data-driven instruction is theirs will fundamental improvements begin to occur” (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2011). These improvements will be evident in both teacher and student performance.
Another intended goal is to have teachers continuously develop their skill-set as they repeatedly engage in the “heavy lifting” of planning, instead of the coaches, and collaborate with their peers. Miles (2008) states that teachers will improve their practice by exposing them to constructive criticism and allowing teachers to practice together over time, this creates a mutual sense of accountability (Location 500). A collaborative culture that continuously evolves and supports mutual accountability is the desired outcome. I believe that this outcome is possible if planning is grounded in content relevant to teaching and learning, and is supported with the expertise of a competent coach.

Finally, the intended goal is to build capacity among all teachers whereby it is evident in the attitude and behaviors of teachers as well as student performance. A research study by Miles (2008) found that when schools allow teachers to have common planning time and control their instructional decisions, it would be evident in student performance. Each of the intended goals relates to improved student learning because each of the goals speaks to improving the quality of the teacher, instruction, student tasks, and the overall learning environment. These items directly affect student learning. By shifting the responsibilities of leading a PLC to teachers, improving teacher competence, building school-wide instructional capacity, and creating an environment of shared leadership, improvements in student learning are expected to occur.

**Exploratory Questions**

In an effort to meet the goals of the program evaluation, I have identified both primary and secondary questions that will be driving this program evaluation research. The primary questions are those questions designed to help me determine to what extent SES implemented the PLC model, as perceived by key stakeholders. The secondary
questions are those questions designed to help me clarify processes and will allow me to synthesize information and draw conclusions about the effectiveness of PLCs at SES. I have carefully constructed both sets of questions to ensure that the research is specific and focused. The primary and secondary questions are as follows:

**Primary Questions**

1. What do the stakeholders (teachers, coaches, and school administrators) who are involved in professional learning communities (PLCs) at SES report as working well in the PLC process?

2. What do the stakeholders (teachers, coaches, and school administrators) who are involved in professional learning communities report as not working well in the PLC process?

3. What do the stakeholders (teachers, coaches, and school administrators) who are involved in professional learning communities report as the biggest challenges in the PLC process?

4. What do the stakeholders (teachers, coaches, and school administrators) who are involved in professional learning communities suggest as ways to improve the PLC process?

**Secondary Questions**

1. To what extent is the program effective in attaining its goals (to increase competence and increase the use of best practices among teachers in an effort to improve student achievement) according to the perceptions of its stakeholders (teachers, coaches, and school administrators)?
2. What do stakeholders (teachers, coaches, and school administrators) perceive as the supports needed to engage effectively and continuously in a professional learning community?

Collectively, these questions will allow me to determine the current behaviors and perceptions of the individuals participating in PLCs at SES. This information coupled with research that defines key elements of a PLC that translate to teacher development and student achievement, will provide me with the knowledge required to move forward with program improvement.

**Conclusion**

In order for SES to move forward and continue to improve the quality of teaching and academic performance, it is critical that we also improve the quality of our Professional Learning Communities. This is the space whereby teachers further enhance their skill and evolve as professionals. This state of improvement or lack thereof has a direct impact on student achievement. If we continue to allow instructional coaches to do the heavy lifting, they will continue to evolve while our teachers and student performance remain stagnant.

There are several benefits to having teachers reflect and continuously develop their craft: in particular, I believe that teachers feel empowered, maintain a greater sense of commitment to their schools, and produce better tasks and learning experiences for students. Creating a shared collaborative culture will also ensure some degree of sustainability because we would be building capacity throughout the entire school instead of only building capacity in the instructional coaches. Sustaining a structure that supports improvement for students and teachers, in a tangible way, is the vision.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Now more than ever, there is a movement to increase student-learning outcomes for all students as the achievement gap continues to widen across our nation. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are a current trend in education that are regarded by some as a critical element in improving learning conditions for students while increasing competence among educators, and perhaps something less to others. In many contexts, the term PLC is used to describe a group of professionals coming together for a single purpose, and therefore vary in its application. This literature review will make an effort to define PLCs, identify benefits and challenges, and finally connect PLCs to teacher efficacy, professional development and student learning based on scholarly research. The main bodies of research that I will be examining in this literature review will include DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, and Mattos (2016), DuFour & Fullan (2013), and Bambrick-Santoyo (2010).

Professional Learning Communities

According to DuFour et al. (2016), a professional learning community is “an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve” (p. 9). Dougherty (2012) shares a similar notion in that professional learning communities are characterized by an ongoing even exchange of sharing and learning, among all participants, that is carried out in their actions. Therefore, a professional learning community is more than a group of professionals coming together for a single purpose. There are greater expectations within this community. The individuals who are active
members of a PLC are committed to the idea that their school and PLC exist to ensure that all students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful. DuFour et al. (2016) further frames the concept of professional learning communities by providing three big ideas of a PLC which include (1) a focus on learning (2) a collaborative culture and collective responsibility, and (3) a results orientation.

**Focus on learning.**

It only makes sense that the collaboration among educators within these communities is centered on the very thing that the institution was established upon, student learning. Essentially, this is the mission of the professional learning community. It is not enough for a PLC to focus on whether the students were taught or are given an opportunity to learn; rather PLCs must remain focused on ensuring that all students learn and at high levels (DuFour, et al., 2016). According to Pirtle & Tobias (2014), research indicates that when teachers engage in the meaningful work of a PLC, “there is a strong correlation between the effective use of PLCs in schools, and improved teacher learning and instruction and student learning” (p. 2). To ensure that the activities within a PLC are focused on student learning, PLCs should be framed with the following four questions (DuFour et. al, 2016, p. 59):

1. What is it we want our students to know and be able to do?
2. How will we know if each student has learned it?
3. How will we respond when some students do not learn it?
4. How can we extend the learning for students who have demonstrated proficiency?
Moreover, when the work of a PLC is constructed on these four questions, it is clear that student learning is the focus and is more likely to be the driver behind the actions of those who participated in such a PLC. It is at this point, educators move closer to ensuring that all students are learning.

**Collaborative culture and collective responsibility.**

My favorite quote on collaboration comes from Robert John Meehan (2015), it states, “the most valuable resource that all teachers have is each other, without collaboration our growth is limited to our own perspectives.” It thereby seems that learning from others is a condition for growth. Smith, Frey, Pumpian, & Fisher (2017) summarizes these thoughts beautifully by stating that effective professional learning communities embody collaboration with other teachers, and coaching while examining student work. In other words, an effective PLC cannot exist without collaboration.

In a research study conducted by Chong & Kong (2012), they found that when collaboration was coupled with prime conditions over time, it resulted in teacher learning transferring to practice. This statement proves that collaboration is a critical element in the PLC process. While it is a critical element, it is worth noting that collaboration alone does not result in improvement. The individuals collaborating must be focused on the right work in order for improvement to occur.

Wagner (2008) reasons that the right work is defined by the challenge a team will face around teaching and learning, the desired results, and the path the team will take to get there. Everyone has a role to play as a member of a PLC, and each member is mutually responsible for the focus and collaboration within the PLC. Collaboration
begets collective responsibility. When all members of a PLC operate interdependently in those roles, the PLC moves toward improvement.

**Results orientation.**

Lastly, PLCs within schools must be driven and guided by student results in order to be successful (DuFour et al., 2016). The focus on student learning and evidence of student learning are married concepts for the argument of effective PLCs. Bambrick-Santoyo (2010) states that this is the only way professional learning communities can offer significant benefits. When PLCs use results to orient their actions around teaching and learning, the actions of the PLC communicate that they are looking for another way to improve student learning and the response for improvement is more adaptive, further enhancing the likelihood of reaching that goal.

The nature of this work is a process because it is endlessly recurring. Developing PLCs that are results-oriented do not happen overnight. It does require time and an intentional focus on learning, but failing to bridge teaching and analysis is a costly mistake that impedes success as a school (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010). This is primarily because it is unreasonable to think that one could improve student-learning outcomes without examining the teaching conditions that produced the learning results. Looking at either in isolation and failing to recognize the relationship ultimately cost schools, primarily in human capital and time. In education, we cannot afford to continue to incur this cost because our future is dependent upon student success.
Benefits of a Professional Learning Community

Professional development.

Professional learning communities provide several benefits to a school. The first of which is the professional development opportunity for teachers. A Canadian study by Campbell (2017) states that professional learning communities provide job-embedded professional development that is practical and relevant to teacher needs. DuFour & Fullan (2013) argues that the best professional development takes place within the context of the work. Miles & Frank (2008) further add that the ideal professional development opportunities for teachers pair professional development activities and methods that are most likely to improve student achievement on-site. Within PLCs, teachers are actively engaged in the work as opposed to hearing about the work, and they are allowing a research-based framework to shape that work.

When teachers are provided ongoing opportunities to engage in the work it lends itself to learning, when teachers acquire knowledge they are more likely to use it, and when teachers use the knowledge students benefit. PLCs also provide a learning environment that fosters the inquiry process. Teachers should be given the opportunity to view problems as learners instead of assuming the answer or that a former solution will work for a current problem (Wagner, 2008). Buchanan (2012) adds that professional development for teachers should be framed on a learner-stance, much like teaching, because this approach takes into account the interrelationship among teachers and provides them with the reward of learning from one another. Collectively cultivating a natural curiosity through the inquiry process around teaching and learning, leads to
problem solving and professional development for teachers who are engaged in the process.

**Leadership capacity.**

The second benefit of teachers engaging in the professional learning communities is the development of leadership capacity. When teachers engage in the PLC process over time, leadership emerges. Leadership is often characterized by initiative (Wagner, 2008). Initiative denotes a deeper level of commitment to the vision and goals among its members. Cormier & Oliver (2009) makes the point that leadership capacity extends beyond the teacher who is willing to take initiative, and is produced when teachers are provided with opportunities to take on various roles and their strengths and talents are shared to develop others or advance the mission.

PLCs foster leadership, and is a byproduct of increasing teachers’ instructional capacity. As teachers continue to develop their skills and become more proficient in the art and science of teaching, they begin to share more competently on the basis of knowledge versus opinion or beliefs (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010). Based on the literature from Wiseman, Allen & Foster (2013), teachers develop a stronger commitment to the vision, mission and goals of the PLC that materialize into individual actions for a collective vision and creates somewhat of a *multiplier effect* within an organization due to these individuals multiplying intelligence and capabilities in others. This generates an increase in shared leadership, and schools then begin to move sizably, creating more sustainable effects for teaching and learning because these leaders are able to multiply the intelligence and capabilities of others within their school environment.
Collegiality and collective efficacy.

The third benefit mentioned in this review is collegiality and collective efficacy. According to Daresh & Lynch (2010) collegiality is an environment where members of a learning community practice respect, share a sense of camaraderie, like one another, and exercise trust all while being on the same page. Consistently engaging in PLCs produces collegiality as teachers consistently come together to learn, construct new knowledge, and problem solve because it creates a sense of interdependence where characteristics of a collegial community can mature. The PLC frame by DuFour et al. (2018) supports this notion, in that if the members of the learning community effectively engage in the process, collegiality will occur which will further lead to collective efficacy among the group.

When teachers know that they can bring a challenge regarding teaching and learning to their team and receive help in problem solving, they are affirmed and it strengthens their belief that they can positively affect student outcomes (Pirtle & Tobias, 2004). This is what an effective PLC will produce. Cormier & Oliver (2009) states that teams that engender self-efficacy have a greater capacity to problem solve. Additionally, when a school adopts and practice collective efficacy, it reduces privatization of teaching and learning, strengthening and leveling learning conditions for students (Comier & Oliver, 2009). When we level learning conditions for students by engaging in best practices such as de-privatizing our instructional practice, we are doing what is right and ethical for kids.

Lastly, PLCs through collegiality and collective efficacy can improve overall job satisfaction and support a positive school culture (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). Job
satisfaction is helpful to sustaining the work, but it is not everything. In fact, Kanold (2017) contends that teachers being satisfied with their job does not always mean they will commit to getting the job done. Therefore, job satisfaction, is not the defining factor of success but important enough to be a factor that influences the work, thus a benefit to a professional learning community and school.

**Student achievement.**

Finally, perhaps the most important benefit of professional learning communities is the vast potential for student achievement. While no single piece of literature discussed in this review, in my opinion, definitively proved that implementing professional learning communities in a particular way would lead to drastic student achievement. DuFour & Fullan (2013) further illustrates this point when they explicitly state, “there is no formula to be followed that guarantees the desired outcomes” (p. 3). DuFour et al. (2016) and DuFour & Fullan (2013) did however provide evidence that the collection of best practices, namely the three big ideas that exemplify PLCs, do lead to improvement in student achievement, as evidenced in case studies. Therefore, if within the context of schools, PLCs are treated as a process where it continuously address challenges and make adjustments based on its findings, student achievement will increase.

Student achievement can take on forms that go beyond the numerical values associated with student achievement data such as students gaining a deeper understanding of the content, and/or application of skills (Dougherty, 2012). These are prerequisites to seeing the numerical value increase. Absent a formula for success, it makes sense, in any context, that if within a learning environment teachers focus on learning, do so collectively, and are oriented by results, there will be an improvement in student
achievement. Professional learning communities provide a framework for best practices and optimal learning conditions for teachers. When instruction is clear and purposeful for teachers, students learn under the best conditions (Dougherty, 2012). The best conditions for learning is certainly the space whereby students stand the great chance for learning at high levels.

**Challenges of a Professional Learning Community**

**Implementation.**

Professional learning communities as stated herein offer several benefits, but they can also present challenges. According to the body of research used in this review, most challenges present themselves during implementation. Reeves (2009), states that in many cases, programs and processes fail to result in student achievement because it has not been implemented deeply over time. I presume that the implementation of PLCs are no different. DuFour et al. (2016) and DuFour & Fullan (2013) have emphatically emphasized that professional learning communities are not a program, but rather a process that must be implemented with depth and intent.

Furthermore, when systems fail to take this approach in implementing PLCs it is unlikely to succeed. Success in this context means to create a learning environment whereby teachers and student are learners under the best possible conditions, so much so that there is a sustainable culture, evidenced by teachers’ continuous professional development and a gradual increase in student achievement. PLCs require time and space, mutual accountability, and repeated practice (Reeves, 2009). When implementing PLCs we must remember that engaging in this work is a process, one that will be significantly undermined if we do not embrace this notion and pursue quick wins.
Establish a clear purpose.

Part of implementing PLCs with intent and depth is establishing a clear mission, vision and goals. DuFour et al. (2018) says that one of the biggest mistakes in implementing PLCs is when school leaders exclusively focus on how they are going to accomplish a PLC and fail to provide a clear understanding of the why. One key characteristic of a highly effective PLC is having a shared mission, vision, values, and goals that all aim toward student learning (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). When leaders fail to lay this foundation and develop these elements collectively, they become challenged with sustaining the how necessary to achieve an improvement in student learning. This is mainly because at this point, there is a lack of cohesion school-wide.

This lack of cohesion may not show up in individual teams, there may be teams that engage in productive work, however, the productive work of a small few is undermined when the school as a whole is not moving toward a common mission and vision. According to Miles & Frank (2008), there was a three-year study that proved instructionally coherent schools are twice as likely to improve student performance. Thus, taking the time to develop instructional coherence in a school by establishing a shared mission, vision, values, and goals that have an aim toward student learning, has its rewards, namely a strong foundation in which to propel change.

Buy-in.

Another foreseeable challenge is getting teachers to see the value of PLCs. In one study by Voelkel & Chrispeels (2017), they found that some teachers viewed collective decision making as means to undermine their classroom autonomy and consequently were unable to fully commit to the PLC process. This challenge can be addressed
effectively if school leaders stay the course, and take opportunities to celebrate wins with the use of data. To clarify this point, Bambrick-Santoyo (2010) says that complete buy-in by all staff is not required to begin an initiative, and that this will occur once a group of individuals have experienced some sense of achievement within this setting.

Most people must engage in the work before they realize it is constructive (Reeves, 2009). This will help change their perception of PLCs and their impact on student growth and professional development when success in some form has been realized and is evidenced in a tangible way. In sum, the best way to overcome the buy-in challenge is to create wins and help teachers accomplish some level of achievement that is viewed as such by them.

**Navigating conflict.**

The final challenge presented in this review is the capacity for school leaders to navigate conflict effectively. Conflict is essential to the PLC process, in fact, lack thereof suggests a superficial change that has no real reach (DuFour et al., 2018). The solution to navigating the conflict is two-fold. Leaders must have the leadership capacity to navigate the nuances of change, and be willing to follow-through because failing to exercise either can stop the PLC process before it even begins. In addition to being a strong communicator and change agent, a school leader must be able to navigate conflict (Comier & Oliver, 2009).

When conflict arise, a school leader must acknowledge all perspectives, then find a commonality within those perspectives, and use that to leverage forward movement within the group (DuFour et al., 2016). This skillful act does not resolve conflict alone. The environment for which this can occur must be safe, and the leader communicating
must deliver the message in a manner that allows the confidence of each individual to remain intact. Furthermore, school leaders must act when the actions of others disregard the collective commitments of the school to include following through with consequences; otherwise, what should be regarded as important becomes ambiguous at best (DuFour et al., 2016). When something is unclear, it cannot be fully realized within an organization.

Finally, when navigating change, leaders can provide a balance to conflict by publicly celebrating small wins. The small wins need to be connected to the shared values and goals. Celebrating wins is a way to remind those engaged in the work of the priorities as well as the purpose, in a manner that is motivating and positive (DuFour et al., 2018). Taking this approach can help school leaders navigate this challenge and come out on the other side where there is progress toward teacher efficacy and student achievement.

**Definition of Terms**

In education, several words take on different meanings depending on the context, thereby creating jargon and colloquialisms used among various groups within education. Subsequently, a few words may take on a different meaning depending on one’s educational association. In an effort to eliminate confusion, to be clear and narrow the focus within this review, I have defined a few terms that will aid in this effort. The terms defined are as follows:

- **Action Research** - is learning by doing. It is the process whereby a group of individuals, identify a problem, do something to resolve it, evaluate efforts, and if not successful, try again (Aurora Learning Community Association, 2013).
Collective Inquiry - the process of learning how to learn together (DuFour et al., 2016).

Collective Efficacy - when teachers collectively evaluate their ability to influence student outcomes (Chong & Kong, 2012).

Multiplier Effect - when leaders go beyond their own genius and focus on extracting and extending the genius of others to the extent that the brainpower essentially double the size of their staff for free (Wiseman et al., 2013).

Conclusion

In conclusion, a professional learning community can offer several benefits for teachers and students alike when PLCs embody the three big ideas (1) a focus on learning, (2) collaborative culture and collective responsibility, and (3) a results orientation (DuFour et al., 2016). Some of these benefits include professional development for teachers, an increase in leadership capacity among teachers, an increase in collegiality and collective efficacy, and finally an improvement in student achievement. Given that return, it is may be easy for a practitioner to view these benefits through a lens of promise and hope, whereby the intentional implementation of professional learning communities have the potential to close equity and achievement gaps. Arguably, enough reason for any institution, namely educational institutions, to give it a go.

Although professional learning communities have a plethora of benefits, they do not come without its share of challenges. Some of the challenges are with implementation, establishing a clear purpose, buy-in, and navigating conflict. Although these challenges seem robust, the best way to tackle them is for school leaders to
anticipate these challenges, develop a plan to address them, and follow through because a solution can be found for each challenge. In close, the research says that implementing PLCs with fidelity is a viable means to accomplish and sustain school improvement. Hence, we should all partake in this good, yet challenging work.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design Overview

Patton (2008) states, “evaluations typically describe and assess what was intended (goals and objectives), what happened that was unintended, what was actually implemented, and what outcomes and results were achieved” (p. 5). In gathering information through research, this is precisely what I am hoping to gather for the purpose of improving the Professional Learning Communities at SES. By evaluating the perspective of teachers, instructional coaches, and school-based administrators, I hope to create a clear understanding of the current state of the PLC process at SES, and measure those results against the intended program goals as well as best practices according to research. I will then use those findings to improve practices and better allocate resources.

As it currently stands, we have not utilized any tools to measure the effectiveness of the PLC process at the school level. There is data available from classroom walks that identify instructional trends. There is also data for student outcomes. However, we have not established data points nor have we used existing data points to determine the effectiveness of professional learning communities. This program evaluation will aim to collect data to determine the effectiveness of PLCs. Wagner (2008) contends that we are getting results for what we measure but we are not measuring the right things. This is
why it is necessary to carefully design research questions and select the appropriate data measures.

In order to develop a clear picture, it is essential that I consider the perspective of key stakeholders and compile that information using both quantitative and qualitative methods. In accordance with American Educational Research Association Code of Ethics (2011), I will obtain this perspective through analyzing responses to my carefully designed questions posed on surveys and in interviews, students’ standard achievement data, and PLC observations. This comprehensive approach will help me derive a deeper understanding of how the PLC process is implemented based on evidence, allowing me to make informed judgements about the effectiveness of the program.

**Participants**

For the purpose of this program evaluation, there will be several participants. I have divided the participants into three groups. The groups are as follows: teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators. Each of these groups play a valuable role in the research development for the PLC process.

The first group consist of teachers, as they are key players in the PLC process. They are the largest group of individuals who make up the professional learning communities on campus. There are approximately 50 teachers on campus. Teachers are the individuals who are responsible for implementing the plans developed or provided during the PLC. They can draw on experiences to provide rich insight into the PLC process and its implementation through surveys, interviews and observations. Furthermore, PLCs were designed primarily to benefit this group along with students by
being able to effectively meet the professional development needs of the teachers and increase competence and best practices among them.

The second group consists of instructional coaches. This group was selected because they are responsible for facilitating the PLCs, according to site-based administrators, and their job descriptions provided by the district. There are three on campus and these individuals, in addition to facilitating PLCs, are responsible for deconstructing the standards, task alignment, lesson development, providing resources to teachers as needed, and monitoring for goal attainment and program effectiveness. These individuals are also very close to the work. The three instructional coaches have been at SES since the school was under the state’s supervision as a DA school. They have seen the school evolve and can provide valuable insight on teacher development through the PLC process.

The third group consist of administrators. There are four administrators on campus. These individuals have the deepest understanding of the immediate goals, long-term goals and desired outcomes of the program as it relates to the school goals. This knowledge is needed to understand the full scope of the program and will be obtained through surveys, interviews, and observations. Administrators are also responsible for communicating the vision, monitoring program implementation, and supporting PLCs on campus. Administrators at SES are participants in the PLC process and work closely with the district to continuously develop the PLCs on campus and evolve as leaders.

**Data Gathering Techniques**

In research, the manner in which you gather data is directly related to the quality of your outcomes and the ethical tone for which the results are communicated (Patton,
That is why I made every attempt to be methodical and disciplined in my data gathering techniques. I want the findings to be used in a productive manner, to lead PLC program improvements at SES. A comprehensive description of data gathering techniques can be found below for surveys, interviews and student achievement data.

**Surveys.**

The first step in this process was to obtain permission from my principal to survey and interview PLC participants for my program evaluation project (Appendix A). I scheduled a sit down meeting with him as part of my requirement as an NLU student in the Educational Leadership Internship course, and discussed the details of my program evaluation project. During this time, I asked for time in a faculty meeting to speak to the staff to begin the data collection process. During this meeting, he gave me permission to do so.

During the faculty meeting, I used 10 minutes to ask teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators to complete a survey for research purposes. I explained to them that their participation was voluntary. I also explained the steps they would need to take if they were interested in participating in an interview. I also provided an opportunity for questions. There were none.

I delivered a survey to all teachers (Appendix B), the instructional coaches (Appendix C), administrators (Appendix D) with instructions during the faculty meeting. Each survey contained different questions. The survey questions were based on the participants’ role in the PLC process. The questions contained a combination of multiple choice, open-ended questions, and rated responses.
The survey was administered using paper and pencil. The multiple choice questions were designed to classify participant groups based on their years of experience as an educator and their years of experience with a PLC model. The open-ended questions addressed the primary questions created for this program evaluation. The rated responses allowed me to measure the attitudes, opinions and perceptions of the participants regarding the program.

During the faculty meeting, I was sure to explain the process, intent, purpose and confidentially. I emphasized their right to refuse or discontinue at any point. I further explained that: participation is voluntary and that they may discontinue participation at any time with no negative consequences. The identity of the school, the district, and all participants remained confidential, as it was not attached to these data and I used pseudonyms for all participants, the school, and the district in the report. Only I have access to all of the survey data, which I will keep in a locked cabinet at my home and on a password protected hard drive for up to 5 years after the completion of this study, at which time I will shred these data.

I laid out 2 letter-sized envelopes – 1 labeled surveys and 1 labeled consent forms. I gave each group of participants 2 consent forms and 1 survey. Those who wanted to participate in the survey signed 1 consent form (Appendix E) and sealed it in the envelope labeled “consent form”. They kept the additional consent form for their records. They then completed the survey, and sealed it in the envelope labeled “surveys”.

I explained that if they chose not to participate, they could seal the blank documents in the respective envelope. Teachers, coaches and administrators were able to place both envelopes - completed or not completed – in the respectively labeled large
manila envelope. Once the faculty meeting was over, I left the sealed envelopes in the front office, outside of the secretary’s office in her mailbox outside the door. People were encouraged to return the blank forms or envelopes as well, this ensured that people did not feel pressured, and it was an additional method to protect confidentiality. I removed the contents of the large manila envelopes at the end of every school day for up to 7 school days.

If a participant was interested in participating in an interview, they were able to indicate this choice at the end of the survey. Since there are approximately 50 teachers, 3 instructional coaches, and 3 administrators who can participate in the survey, my goal was to get at least 34 teachers, 2 instructional coaches, and 2 administrators to complete the survey to ensure that the results truly reflect the opinion of the research population (Krejcie & Morgan, 2014).

**Interviews.**

I interviewed teachers (Appendix F), coaches (Appendix G) and administrators (Appendix H) who participate in at least one of the major content area PLCs such as Language Arts, Reading, Math and/or Science. For a copy of the teacher interview protocol, instructional coach interview protocol, and the administrator interview protocol, please see Appendix F, G, and H respectively. However, interview participants were determined on a voluntary basis. At the end of the survey, participants indicated whether they were interested in participating in an interview and sent an email based on the instructions provided at the end of the survey.

Once I received the email, I set up a date and time that was convenient for the participant to conduct the interview. The interview for each stakeholder (teacher,
instructional coach, and administrator) focused on their experiences based on their role within PLCs. The face-to-face interviews did not exceed 30 minutes and contained no more than 15 questions. If additional responses were needed to clarify information, I followed up via email, being careful not to exceed five email exchanges.

Prior to each interviewee participating, I asked them to sign the Informed Consent Adult Participant Interview form (Appendix I). During that time, I was sure to explain the process, intent, purpose and confidentially, being sure to express their right to refuse or discontinue at any point. I explained that participation is voluntary and that they could discontinue participation at any time with no negative consequences. I kept the identity of the school, the district, and all participants confidential, as it was not attached to these data and I used pseudonyms for all participants, the school, and the district in the report. I recorded the interviews with an audio recorder and handwritten notes. The interview notes allowed me to remember key points when it was time to synthesize the information to draw conclusions. Only I have access to all of the interview data, which I will keep in a locked cabinet at my home and on a password protected hard drive for up to 5 years after the completion of this study, at which time I will shred these data.

The interviews allowed me to obtain further clarification around some of the survey questions. It provided an elaboration of the participant’s thoughts so that I may have an idea of the opinions represented among the stakeholders. Collectively, the interview findings gave me a better understanding of how the PLC process work at SES based on the perspective and role of each participant.
Student achievement data.

Finally, I analyzed student achievement data, specifically the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) in the areas of Writing (3-5), Language Arts (3-5), Math (3-5), and Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT) for 5th grade Science. These assessments were used to determine if there was any growth based on the percentage of students who are proficient or the percentage of students who made learning gains from the 2016-2017 school year to the 2017-2018 school year. These provided insight as to whether or not the current systems are effective, and if so, in what areas. These data were collected using the schools data collecting systems, Performance Matters, as well as the Florida Department of Education. Largely, I was able to identify trends in these data that could be connected to PLCs, in hopes of replicated best practices in future PLCs to improve student-learning results.

Ethical Considerations

In completing this program evaluation, it was important for me to demonstrate ethical behavior and maintain integrity of this program evaluation so that the findings were trustworthy, practical and useful. Patton (2008) says it best, “A successful program evaluation is useful, practical, ethical and accurate” (p. 199). My aim was to provide a successful program evaluation that demonstrates ethical best practices grounded in truth. Research aims to produce knowledge, truth, and action (Patton, 2008). I have adhered to the multiple rules of ethics in conducting the research for this program evaluation. As a student of National Louis University, I have adhered to the rules outlined in the IRRB Criteria for Ethical Research (National Louis University, 2016). As a school leader, I have adhered to the professional ethics described in Florida Principal Leadership.
Standards (FDOE, 2011), as well as the American Educational Research Association Code of Ethics (AERA, 2011). I have exercised the utmost care in gathering and analyzing the data. Part of exercising the utmost care was demonstrating respect for a person’s ability to choose. Equally, surveys, observations, and interviews were voluntary. Participants decided their level of participation, if any.

In constructing the interview questions and surveys, I used clear language that was easy to understand. Participants were also informed of the purpose of the data gathering and any tool used in the process. I took extra precautions to prevent falsification, harm, and discrimination. I was sure to get consent from all participants (teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators) and appropriate permission from the entities in which I am operating, Sunshine School District and Sunshine Elementary School. Please see Informed Consent: Adult Participant Survey (Appendix E), Informed Consent: Adult Participant Interview (Appendix F), and Informed Consent: School Site Administrator: Consent to Conduct Research at School Site (Appendix A). Each consent form stated the nature of the study, how the study will be used, conditions for participation, and measures used to ensure confidentiality.

I went through all the proper channels to obtain consent as outlined by National Louis University for the purpose of conducting an ethical program evaluation. In developing the program evaluation, I developed pseudonyms to abstain from unwarranted criticism against the district and school. I also maintained confidentiality of all research participants to include teachers, coaches, and administrators by allowing them to remain anonymous. Neither participants’ names nor identities were made public under any circumstances because indefinable information was not published or shared. The
additional data that was gathered for this program evaluation consisted of surveys that were administered with paper and pencil and interview recordings that only I have access to, therefore, the risk was marginal. In this case, the benefits far exceed the risk. I perceive the benefits as program improvement. Teachers, coaches and administrators now have access to information, germane to SES, which will help inform their practice and improve student outcomes if used for those purposes.

Data Analysis Techniques

Primarily my data analysis included triangulation of these data. I began by examining the data for trends and patterns within each data set for each participant group and then I compared those findings across groups and data sets. For example, I compared findings from the surveys to see if the findings were similar or different from that of the interviews. I then compared findings across participant groups. I used reoccurring themes to draw conclusions about the PLC process and the participants’ opinions. Finally, these findings were viewed in comparison to student achievement data. In reflecting, I believe these data analysis techniques allowed me to effectively answer the exploratory questions and make strong inferences regarding the PLC process.

Surveys.

I gathered survey results from teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators. I then compiled the survey data separately. I began by compiling demographic information to determine the years of experience in education as well as the years of experience with a PLC for each participant group. Next, I moved to the scaled responses and used frequency charts to tally responses. The choice for scaled responses included: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. I then used those tallies to
determine percentages for each response type. Once percentages were determined, I looked for high and low percentages to determine shared opinions and possible strong statements. I then compared the percentages of the shared response questions across groups to look for any similarities.

For the open-ended questions, I began by coding participant responses. I then went back through the coding and identified themes. I completed this step for each participant group. I then compared themes across participant groups. This process was straightforward as all of the open-ended questions were the same for each participant group. I then determined how many participants reported this theme and developed percentages to correspond. Each of these participant groups offered different perspectives, but I was able to see how strong an opinion was reflected based on the percentage of the theme. I was able to draw conclusions about how each group perceives the effectiveness of the program from different points of view. The questions posed further helped me determine potential concerns that need to be addressed for program improvement. The results also helped me to consider whether opinions were shared among participants, thereby increasing the need to address the issues.

**Interviews.**

I gathered interview results from teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators. I then compiled the results separately. I used an audio recorder to record the each interview and took notes by hand. These tapes were submitted to a professional transcriber. Once the transcriptions were returned, I compiled the data. I went through each response and began coding the responses. Once the response were coded, I went back through and identified themes. I then determined how many participants reported
this theme and developed percentages to correspond. I then compared those themes across participant groups.

The percentages allowed me to make inferences about the opinions of participant groups based on how high or low the percentages were for a theme. Once the percentages were solidified, I was able to see the different perspectives. These data provided some qualitative information regarding how each group perceived the PLC process. While I found the surveys informative, the interviews allowed the participants to elaborate on the ideas expressed during the survey. I was then able to more accurately interpret meaning and make judgements.

**Student achievement data.**

I used student achievement data at SES to determine if student achievement improved from year to year. I began analyzing the data by determining overall growth and proficiency from year to year in Math, Science and ELA in grades 3-5, beginning with the 2015-2016 school year, on the FSA and FCAT. This allowed me to see how students historically perform at SES on standardized assessments. I then compared growth in those subject areas to the opinions about PLCs from survey and interviews. For example, if the overall participants stated, on a survey, that PLCs helped them to increase competence but students are not improving from year to year, I am able to draw the inference that there is a disconnect somewhere. I then used the additional interview and survey responses to make judgements about where disconnects exist.

These data allowed me to identify relationships between student achievement and teacher practices within PLCs, evidenced by the surveys, interviews, FCAT, and the FSA data. Collectively, these data allowed me to see if the perceptions of each participant
group were consistent with student achievement. This discovery provided further context to the primary questions in this program evaluation.

**Conclusion**

The methodology that I will use for reporting the data is critically important. When you design any evaluation, you should pay careful attention to how everything that is done from the beginning to the end, will affect the use of your findings (Patton, 2008). I tried to keep this in mind since I wanted the findings from the evaluation to be useful for improving the quality of the program. I wanted to employ methods that would provide the least amount of error as possible, but would also really capture the essence of what was occurring in the program from various perspectives.

The goal of my project is to evaluate the PLC process to determine if the implementation of this process is effective. If the program is determined to be effective, I would like to capitalize on the effective elements within the program by redirecting the program resources such as money, time, and human capital on those elements. I would also like to capitalize on the less effective elements that could potentially be fixed easily such as the focus within PLCs, leadership opportunities, framework for the PLC, and shared responsibilities. Furthermore, I would also like to figure out how the process can sustain itself with the potential of changing staff. If the program were determined to be ineffective, I would like to consider why the program is ineffective and remove those elements from program implementation.

In sum, the methodology will be critical to the validity of the program evaluation. Patton (2008) states that methods is not about meeting some research standard of technical quality but, rather, making sure the validity and credibility needs of the program
evaluation are appropriate and relevant to its intended users. I used this litmus test for developing my research methods for this program evaluation.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Findings

In an effort to present the data in a logical and meaningful manner, I will use Wagner et al. (2006) 4C’s framework to determine the current arenas of change which are context, culture, conditions, and competencies. This framework has enabled me to evaluate the current conditions of the professional learning communities at Sunshine Elementary School (SES) in a comprehensive fashion. I have carefully reviewed the survey, interview and student achievement data, and the findings provided insight as to whether or not the current state of PLCs were effective in meeting its goal. Additionally, these data revealed effective practices for which SES can build upon, as well as opportunities for growth.

Below the presentation of these data, begin with the teachers’, instructional coaches’, and administrators’ survey data. Teachers’, instructional coaches’, and administrators’ interview data follow these survey data. Finally, the presentation of these data conclude with the student achievement data and a comparison of these data across subgroups where there is greater meaning.

After these data have provided some context for the current state of SES to the reader, I detailed the 4C’s to provide a comprehensive understanding of SES’s current state within its PLCs. This sub-section follows an interpretation that includes an analysis of these data previously offered. Thereafter I made judgements with regard to the primary
and secondary question, and concluded with a recommendation for organizational change.

Teacher surveys.

The first set of surveys that are up for review are teacher surveys. Twenty-one out of fifty (42%) teachers participated in the survey. The survey contained a combination of two multiple-choice responses, four open-ended and twelve scaled responses. This subsection will include a breakdown of each question as well as tables to display the survey results.

In response to teacher survey question #1, how many years have you taught, two of twenty-one (9.52%) participants reported zero to three years, four of twenty-one (19.05%) participants reported four to ten years, five of twenty-one (23.81%) participants reported eleven to fifteen years, and ten of twenty-one (47.62%) participants reported sixteen years or more of experience. The majority of the teachers (90.48%) who participated in this study contained over five years of experience. This means that these data reflected herein is that of an experienced educator, and may have provided a deep and knowledgeable perspective that allowed me to synthesize information in a more meaningful way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
<th>Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 3</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
<td>5, 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 10</td>
<td>19.05%</td>
<td>6, 8, 15, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
<td>4, 9, 10, 12, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16+</td>
<td>47.62%</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 7, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to teacher survey question #2, how long have you participated in the PLC process, one of twenty-one (4.76%) participants reported that they did not
participate in a PLC. Three of twenty-one (14.29%) participants reported one year of experience. Seven of twenty-one (33.33%) participants reported two to five years of experience. Five of twenty-one (23.81%) participants reported six to ten years of experience. Three of twenty-one (14.29%) participants reported having eleven or more years of experience. Two of twenty-one teachers did not respond to this survey question. The majority of the teachers (85.72%) who participated have had at least one year of experience with a PLC. In considering teacher survey question #1, these data suggest that the years of experience with PLCs are not consistent with the teacher’s years taught. In other words, a teacher may have been an educator for several years, but may have experienced a PLC for a shorter time.

Table 2
Teacher Survey Question 2: How long have you participated in the PLC process?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
<th>Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I did not participate.</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
<td>5, 10, 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 17,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
<td>3, 15, 16, 20, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 +</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
<td>2, 4, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
<td>12, 14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to teacher survey question #3, what is working well in your PLCs, there were five themes (collaboration, focus on learning, sharing of ideas, fun, and organizing events) reported. Nine of twenty-one (42.86%) participants reported that collaboration and having a focus on learning were working well. Eight of twenty-one (38.10%) participants reported sharing of ideas as working well. One of twenty-one (4.76%) participants reported the remaining themes fun and organizing events as working well. One of twenty-one (4.76%) participants did not respond to this survey question.
Two of twenty-one (9.52%) participants presented themes that are not consistent with what DuFour et al. (2016) defines as characteristics of an effective PLC. This further suggests that there is an opportunity to define PLCs for this staff through professional development.

Table 3

*Teacher Survey Question 3: What is working well in your PLC?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>9 of 21 (42.86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on Learning</td>
<td>9 of 21 (42.86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing of Ideas</td>
<td>8 of 21 (38.10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>1 of 21 (4.76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing Events</td>
<td>1 of 21 (4.76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1 of 21 (4.76%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to teacher survey question #4, *what is not working well in your PLCs*, there were four themes (time, equity of voice, relevance, and attitudes regarding PLCs) reported. Nine of twenty-one (42.86%) participants reported time as not working well. Four of twenty-one (19.08%) participants reported equity of voice not working well. Three of twenty-one (14.29%) participants reported that the relevance was not working well. Two of twenty-one (9.52%) participants reported the attitudes regarding PLCs as not working well. Six of twenty-one (28.57%) participants did not respond to this survey question. This suggests that participants, for whatever reason, did not feel comfortable sharing what did not work well. This could also suggest that teachers did not have a strong enough knowledge base of PLCs to determine what is not working well, further suggesting a need to define a PLC and identify key characteristics within a PLC in professional development.
Table 4
Teacher Survey Question 4: What is not working well in your PLC?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>9 of 21 (42.86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity of Voice</td>
<td>4 of 21 (38.10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>3 of 21 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes Regarding PLCs</td>
<td>2 of 21 (9.52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>6 of 21 (28.57%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to teacher survey question #5, what is the biggest challenge with implementing the PLC process, there were six themes (time, transfer, relevance, resources, buy-in, and lack of knowledge) reported. Nine of twenty-one (42.86%) participants reported time as the biggest challenge. Two of twenty-one (9.52%) participants reported the remaining themes transfer of planning, relevance, resources, buy-in, and lack of knowledge as the biggest challenge. Two of twenty-one (9.52%) participants did not respond to this question. The number of themes and the number of responses for each theme suggest there is in fact a variety of challenges that the leadership team need to address. This is an opportunity for the leadership team to meet with each PLC and engage in a session to identify challenges and solutions, and follow up with support.

Table 5
Teacher Survey Question 5: What is the biggest challenge with implementing the PLC process?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>9 of 21 (42.86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>2 of 21 (9.52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>2 of 21 (9.52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>2 of 21 (9.52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy-in</td>
<td>2 of 21 (9.52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Knowledge</td>
<td>2 of 21 (9.52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>2 of 21 (9.52%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to teacher survey question #6, *what do you believe is the best way to improve the PLC process*, there were four themes (define roles and expectations, relevant, protecting time, and administration present) reported. Ten of twenty-one (47.62%) participants reported defining roles and expectations as the best way to improve. Five of twenty-one (23.81%) participants reported making PLC relevant as the best way to improve. Four of twenty-one (19.05%) participants reported protecting time as the best way to improve. One of twenty-one (4.76%) participants reported having administration present as the best way to improve.

Six of twenty-one (28.57%) participants did not respond to this question. With ten of twenty-one (47.62%) participants, almost half, report a need to define rules and expectations, the suggestion is an obvious one. I would suggest, the leadership team receive training on PLCs and then determine what that will be for teachers at SES. The leadership team should then follow-up by training teachers and define their roles and expectations at SES.

**Table 6**

*Teacher Survey Question 6: What do you believe is the best way to improve the PLC process?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Define Roles &amp; Expectations</td>
<td>10 of 21 (47.62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant</td>
<td>5 of 21 (23.81%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting Time</td>
<td>4 of 21 (19.05%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration Present</td>
<td>1 of 21 (4.76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>6 of 21 (28.57%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher survey questions seven through eighteen are scaled responses. In response to teacher survey question #7, *as a result of the PLC process, I have improved my instructional practice*, twelve of twenty-one (57.14%) participants agreed with the statement. Five of twenty-one (23.81%) participants strongly agreed with the statement.
Two of twenty-one (9.52%) participants responded neutral to the statement. One of twenty-one (4.76%) participants disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement. The majority of the participants (80.32%) agreed on some level that PLCs had improved their instructional practice. This suggests that teachers are receiving some sort of benefit from PLCs.

Table 7
Teacher Survey Question 7: Scaled Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the PLC process, I have improved my instructional practices.</td>
<td>5/21</td>
<td>12/21</td>
<td>2/21</td>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>1/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23.81%</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to teacher survey question #8, as a result of the PLC process, I collaborate more with my peers in meaningful ways, nine of twenty-one (42.86%) participants agreed with the statement. Five of twenty-one (23.81%) participants strongly agreed with the statement. Five of twenty-one (23.81%) participants responded neutral to the statement. Two of twenty-one (9.52%) participants disagreed, and no participants strongly disagreed with the statement. The majority of the participants (66.67%) agreed on some level that PLCs allowed them to collaborate more with their peers in meaningful ways. However, the two of twenty-one (9.52%) participants that disagree with making meaningful connections in PLCs may be in PLCs that need school leaders to assist in fostering meaningful collaboration among the team. Collaborating is part of the three big ideas by DuFour et al. (2016), and is essential to the PLC process. School leaders can reinforce this concept through authentic participation in the PLC process.
In response to teacher survey question #9, as a result of the PLC process, I continuously learn from the instructional practices of my peers through collaboration, nine of twenty-one (42.86%) participants agreed with the statement. Six of twenty-one (28.57%) participants strongly agreed with the statement. Five of twenty-one (23.81%) participants responded neutral to the statement. One of twenty-one (4.76%) participants disagreed, and no participants strongly disagreed with the statement. The majority of the participants (66.67%) agreed that they learned something from the instructional practices of their peers. This suggests that at least in some PLCs teachers are doing more than sharing ideas and are discussing instructional practices.

Table 8
*Teacher Survey Question 8: Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the PLC process, I collaborate more with my peers in meaningful ways.</td>
<td>5/21</td>
<td>9/21</td>
<td>5/21</td>
<td>2/21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23.81%</td>
<td>42.86%</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9
*Teacher Survey Question 9: Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the PLC process, I continuously learn from the instructional practices of my peers through collaboration.</td>
<td>6/21</td>
<td>9/21</td>
<td>5/21</td>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28.57%</td>
<td>42.86%</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to teacher survey question #10, *as a result of the PLC process, I have increased competence in my content area*, twelve of twenty-one (57.14%) participants agreed with the statement. Six of twenty-one (28.57%) participants strongly agreed with the statement. One of twenty-one (4.76%) participants responded neutral to the statement. One of twenty-one (4.76%) participants disagreed with the statement. One of twenty-one (4.76%) participants strongly disagreed with the statement. The majority of the participants (85.71%) agreed that they had increased their knowledge in their content as a result of PLCs. This suggests that the PLCs are discussing the content, at least some of the time, to the point of its participants increasing their content knowledge.

**Table 10**

*Teacher Survey Question 10: Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the PLC process, I have increased competence in my content area.</td>
<td>6/21</td>
<td>12/21</td>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>1/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28.57%</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to teacher survey question #11, *my team uses the time allotted during PLCs to plan assessment/tasks, analyze student work, and/or plan to adjust future instruction based on analysis of the student work*, eight of twenty-one (38.10%) participants were neutral on the statement. Five of twenty-one (23.81%) participants agreed with the statement. Four of twenty-one (19.05%) participants strongly disagreed with the statement. Two of twenty-one (9.52%) participants disagreed with the statement. Two of twenty-one (9.52%) participants strongly disagreed with the statement.
Two of twenty-one (9.52%) participants strongly agreed with the statement. The majority of the participants (66.67%) could not agree that they engaged in data analysis and adjusted future instruction based on this analysis within their PLCs. This suggests that the majority of PLC are not results-oriented, and perhaps those involved are inconsistent. These data further suggest that this has not been established as a priority school-wide.

Table 11
*Teacher Survey Question 11: Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My team uses the time allotted during PLCs to plan assessments/tasks, analyze student work, and/or plan to adjust future instruction based on an analysis of student work.</td>
<td>2/21 9.52%</td>
<td>5/21 23.81%</td>
<td>8/21 38.10%</td>
<td>2/21 9.52%</td>
<td>4/21 19.05%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to teacher survey question #12, *my team and I implement the PLC process with fidelity*, ten of twenty-one (47.62%) participants agreed with the statement. Five of twenty-one (23.81%) participants responded neutral to the statement. Four of twenty-one (19.05%) participants disagreed with the statement. One of twenty-one (4.76%) participants strongly disagreed with the statement. One of twenty-one (4.76%) participants strongly agreed with the statement. The majority of the participants (52.38%) agreed that they were implementing PLCs with fidelity.
However, the remaining participants (47.62%) were either neutral or disagreed with this statement. This suggests that the PLCs at SES are nearly divided with some consistently meeting while others are not. These data may further suggest a connection to teacher survey question #4, *what is not working well in your PLC*, where nine of twenty-one participants (42.86%) reported time as not working well. This could mean that some PLCs are not being implemented with fidelity because the time is not being protected.

**Table 12**
*Teacher Survey Question 12: Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My team and I implement the PLC process with fidelity.</td>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>10/21</td>
<td>5/21</td>
<td>4/21</td>
<td>1/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.76%</td>
<td>47.62%</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
<td>19.05%</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to teacher survey question #13, *my team and I have adequate support in meeting our PLC goals*, nine of twenty-one (42.86%) participants agreed with the statement. Seven of twenty-one (33.33%) participants were neutral on the statement. Three of twenty-one (14.29%) participants strongly agreed with the statement. One of twenty-one (4.76%) participants disagreed with the statement. One of twenty-one (4.76%) participants strongly disagreed with the statement. The majority of the participants (57.15%) agreed that they had adequate support within their PLCs. However, some participants (33.33%) were neutral on the statement. This suggests that there is an opportunity to increase support.
This survey question is directly linked to teacher interview question, #7, what supports do you need to engage effectively and continuously in the PLC process, where the major themes reported from the teachers’ were protected time, administration support, feedback, a collaborative team, have it just need to use it, printing, accountability, and respect. Three of seven (42.86%) participants reported protected time. Two of seven (28.57%) participants reported administration support. The remaining themes (feedback, a collaborative team, have it just need to use it, printing, accountability, and respect) were supported with one of seven (14.29%) participants for each. The variance in responses further suggest that participants are unclear or are divided about what is required to have an effective PLC.

Table 13
Teacher Survey Question 13:Scaled Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My team and I have adequate support in meeting our PLC goals.</td>
<td>3/21 14.29%</td>
<td>9/21 42.86%</td>
<td>7/21 33.33%</td>
<td>1/21 4.76%</td>
<td>1/21 4.76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to teacher survey question #14, I consider myself a leader within my PLC, ten of twenty-one (47.62%) participants were neutral on the statement. Five of twenty-one (23.81%) participants agreed with the statement. Four of twenty-one (19.05%) participants strongly agreed with the statement. One of twenty-one (4.76%) participants disagreed with the statement. One of twenty-one (9.52%) participants strongly disagreed with the statement. The majority of the participants (47.62%) could
not agree nor disagree as to whether or not they considered themselves a leader within in PLC. This suggests that the nature of PLCs have not been linked to leadership, and may have some connection with how they view themselves within the overall context of the school.

Table 14
*Teacher Survey Question 14: Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I consider myself a leader within my PLC</td>
<td>4/21</td>
<td>5/21</td>
<td>10/21</td>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>1/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19.05%</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
<td>47.62%</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to teacher survey question #15, *my students benefit from me participating in a PLC*, twelve of twenty-one (57.14%) participants agreed with the statement. Four of twenty-one (19.05%) participants strongly agreed with the statement. Three of twenty-one (14.29%) participants were neutral on the statement. One of twenty-one (4.76%) participants disagreed with the statement. One of twenty-one (9.52%) participants strongly disagreed with the statement. The majority of the participants (76.19%) agreed that their students benefited from them participating in PLCs. This suggests that the majority of teachers are able to connect their participation in PLCs to some sort of benefit for students. SES could use this as a foundation to further motivate participation and encourage a deeper focus on learning within PLCs.
In response to teacher survey question #16, overall, the PLC process is very beneficial, fifteen of twenty-one (71.43%) participants agreed with this statement. Three of twenty-one (14.29%) participants strongly agreed with the statement. Two of twenty-one (9.52%) participants were neutral on the statement. One of twenty-one (4.76%) participants strongly disagreed with the statement. No participants disagreed with the statement. The majority of the participants (88.72%) agreed that in general, the PLC process was beneficial. This suggests that the majority of participants see value in PLCs and that there is a basic level of acceptance at SES, again, a strong foundation to take PLCs to the next level.

### Table 15
**Teacher Survey Question 15: Scaled Response**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My students benefit from me participating in a PLC.</td>
<td>4/21</td>
<td>12/21</td>
<td>3/21</td>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>1/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19.05%</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 16
**Teacher Survey Question 16: Scaled Response**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall, the PLC process is very beneficial.</td>
<td>3/21</td>
<td>15/21</td>
<td>2/21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.29%</td>
<td>71.43%</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

62
In response to teacher survey question #17, *I understand my role within PLCs*, nine of twenty-one (42.86%) participants agreed with this statement. Five of twenty-one (23.81%) participants were neutral on the statement. Four of twenty-one (19.05%) participants strongly agreed with the statement. Two of twenty-one (9.52%) participants disagreed with the statement. One of twenty-one (4.76%) participants strongly disagreed with the statement. The majority of the participants (61.91%) agreed that they understood their role within in PLCs.

However, this seems to conflict with the results from teacher survey question #6, *what is the best way to improve the PLC process*, where ten of twenty-one (47.62%) participants reported the theme defining roles and expectations as the best way to improve PLCs. This also seems to be inconsistent with teacher survey question #14, *I consider myself a leader within PLCs*, where ten of twenty-one (47.62%) participants could not say whether they considered themselves a leader within PLCs. Collectively, these data suggest either that teachers know their roles and have not been given the opportunity to exercise them or that they are not clear on their roles.

**Table 17**  
*Teacher Survey Question 17: Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I understand my role</td>
<td>4/21</td>
<td>9/21</td>
<td>5/21</td>
<td>2/21</td>
<td>1/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within the PLC.</td>
<td>19.05%</td>
<td>42.86%</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to teacher survey question #18, the quality of my PLC has a huge impact on how I view myself as a member of the larger school community, nine of twenty-one (42.86%) participants agreed with this statement. Five of twenty-one (23.81%) participants were neutral on the statement. Four of twenty-one (19.05%) participants disagreed with the statement. Two of twenty-one (9.52%) participants strongly agreed with the statement. One of twenty-one (4.76%) participants strongly disagreed with the statement. The majority of the participants (52.38%) agreed that their PLC has a huge impact in how they view themselves as a member of the larger school community. This number suggests that PLCs, as viewed by teachers, are significant enough to be used as a focus for a school improvement effort because this setting influence the perceptions of teachers.

Table 18
Teacher Survey Question 18:Scaled Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The quality of my PLC has a huge impact on how I view myself as a member of the larger school community.</td>
<td>2/21</td>
<td>9/21</td>
<td>5/21</td>
<td>4/21</td>
<td>1/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.52%</td>
<td>42.86%</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
<td>19.05%</td>
<td>4.75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instructional coach surveys.

The second set of surveys that are up for review are instructional coach surveys. Two out of three (67%) instructional coaches participated in the survey. The survey contained a combination of two multiple-choice responses, four open-ended and ten
scaled responses. This subsection will include a breakdown of each question as well as tables to display the survey results.

In response to instructional coach survey question #1, *how many years have you been in education*, two of two (100%) participants reported having sixteen years or more experience as an educator. This suggests that these data reflected herein is that of an experienced educator, and may have provided a deep and knowledgeable perspective that allowed me to synthesize information in a more meaningful way.

**Table 19**
*Instructional Coach Survey Question 1: How many years have you been in education?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
<th>Participant(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 3</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 10</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16+</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to instructional coach survey question #2, *how long have you participated in the PLC process*, two of two (100%) participants reported having six to ten years of experience with PLCs. In considering instructional coach survey question #1, these data tell me that the years of experience with a PLC do not parallel with the coaches’ years of experience in education. In other words, each coach has been an educator for several years, but have experienced a PLC for a shorter time.

**Table 20**
*Instructional Coach Survey Question 2: How long have you participated in the PLC process*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
<th>Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I did not participate.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 +</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to instructional coach survey question #3, *what is working well in your PLCs*, there was one theme (focus on learning) reported. Two of two (100%) participants reported that the focus on learning was working well within PLCs. This theme was also reported by teachers on survey question #3, *what is working well in your PLCs*, where nine of twenty-one (42.86%) reported a focus on learning as working well within PLCs. This suggests that there is an agreement between teachers and instructional coaches that having a focus on learning is working well. This is promising, because DuFour et al. (2016), says that this is the essence for which PLCs are built on.

**Table 21**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Coach Survey Question 3: What is working well in your PLC?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response Category</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on Learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to instructional coach survey question #4, *what is not working well in your PLCs*, there were two themes (accountability and analyzing data and applying) reported. Two of two (100%) participants reported accountability as not working well. One of two (50%) participants reported analyzing data and applying as not working well. Teachers did not report these themes, for this question. However, in response to teacher survey question #6, *what do you believe is the best way to improve the PLC process*, the most reported theme was to define roles and expectations. Collectively, this suggests that there may be a disconnect regarding roles and expectations. Teacher may be unclear about the expectation with regard to accountability and their role in analyzing student data within PLCs. Teachers would benefit from some clarity on this topic.
In response to instructional coach survey question #5, what is the biggest challenge with implementing the PLC process, there were two themes (time and data analysis) reported. One of two (50%) participants reported time as the biggest challenge. One of two (50%) participants reported data analysis as the biggest challenge. While data analysis was not a theme reported by teachers on survey question #5, what is the biggest challenge with implementing the PLC process, time was reported with nine of twenty-one (42.86%) reporting time as the biggest challenge. This suggests that time is an issue that need to be addressed as a greater school community.

In response to instructional coach survey question #6, what do you believe is the best way to improve the PLC process, there were three themes (come prepared, time for data analysis, and creating teacher leaders) reported. Two of two (100%) participants reported coming prepared as the best way to improve. Two of two (100%) participants reported providing time for data analysis as the best way to improve. One of two (50%) reported creating teacher leaders as the best way to improve. These data suggest that providing time for analyzing data and coming prepared for PLCs are equally important among instructional coaches. The fact that both coaches reported both themes suggests
that these themes are a valid path for improvement. Additionally, the theme create teacher leaders is consistent with teacher survey data in question #14, *I see myself as leader within my PLC*, where ten of twenty-one teachers could not say whether they view themselves as leaders. This suggests that there is a need to build teacher leadership capacity, a key element in sustaining an effective PLC.

**Table 24**  
*Instructional Coach Survey Question 6: What do you believe is the best way to improve the PLC process?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protecting Time</td>
<td>2 of 2 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>2 of 2 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create Teacher Leaders</td>
<td>1 of 2 (50%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instructional coach survey questions seven through sixteen are scaled responses. In response to instructional survey question #7, *the goals and expectations for my participation in the PLC process has been clearly articulated*, two of twenty-one (100%) participants strongly agreed with the statement. These data suggest that they are clear on what their role is within PLCs.

**Table 25**  
*Instructional Coach Survey Question 7: Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The goals and expectations for my participation within the PLC process has been clearly articulated.</td>
<td>2/2 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to instructional coach survey question #8, I am consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs, two of two (100%) participants reported strongly agree with the statement. This suggests that the instructional coaches value this time and understand how the importance of being prepared relate to the overall success of the PLC.

Table 26
Instructional Coach Survey Question 8: Scaled Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs.</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to instructional coach survey question #9, teachers are consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs, one of two (50%) participants agreed with the statement. One of two (50%) participants disagreed with the statement. This suggests that at least in some PLCs there is a need to address teachers’ lack of preparedness by providing clear expectations on being prepared and holding them accountable.

Table 27
Instructional Coach Survey Question 9: Scaled Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>50%</strong></td>
<td><strong>50%</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to instructional coach survey question #10, *teachers consistently contribute to the PLCs*, two of two (100%) participants reported they agreed with the statement. This suggests that teachers are contributing something, and thereby teachers and coaches have the potential to evolve in the quality of those contributions.

**Table 28**
*Instructional Coach Survey Question 10: Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers consistently contribute to the PLCs.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to instructional coach survey question #11, *the hard work is evenly shared among all members of the PLC*, one of two (50%) participants agreed with the statement. One of two (50%) participants disagreed with this statement. This was an even divide among instructional coaches. This may suggest they have different expectation for sharing within the PLC or that there is a difference in how they hold them accountable.

**Table 29**
*Instructional Coach Survey Question 11: Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The hard work is evenly shared among all members of the PLC.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to instructional coach survey question #12, the PLC process is beneficial for teachers and students, two of two (100%) participants agreed with the statement. This finding is consistent with the responses reported by teachers in teacher survey question #15, my students benefit from me participating in the PLC process, where sixteen of twenty-one (76.19%) participants either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This finding is consistent with the responses reported by teachers in teacher survey question #16, which stated, overall, the PLC process is very beneficial, where eighteen of twenty-one (85.29%) participants agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This suggests that PLCs have in fact been beneficial to teachers and students.

Table 30
Instructional Coach Survey Question 12: Scaled Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The PLC process is beneficial for teachers and students.</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to instructional coach survey question #13, my team use the time allotted for during PLCs to plan assessments/tasks, analyze student work, and/or plan to adjust instruction based on analysis of student work, one of two (50%) participants strongly agreed with this statement. One of two (50%) participants disagreed with this statement. This suggests that in addition to there being a disconnect among coaches with regard to what should be happening in PLCs, this could also suggest a disconnect
between what administrators believe should be occurring and what they have clearly communicated.

**Table 31**
*Instructional Coach Survey Question 13: Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My team use the time allotted during PLCs to plan assessments/tasks, analyze student work, and/or plan to adjust future instruction based on an analysis of student work.</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to instructional coach survey question #14, *in my PLC, we frequently learn from each other’s practice*, one of two (50%) participants strongly agreed with the statement. One of two (50%) participants were neutral on the statement. This response is consistent with teacher survey question #8, *as a result of the PLC process, I collaborate more with my peers in meaningful ways*, where fourteen of twenty-one (66.67%) participants agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while five of twenty-one (23.81%) participants were neutral on the statement, and two of twenty-one (9.52%) participants disagreed. These data suggest that while teacher may be collaborating in meaningful ways that allows them to learn, there is an opportunity for growth.
In response to instructional coach survey question #15, teachers frequently take on leadership roles within the PLCs, one of two (50%) participants strongly agree with the statement. One of two (50%) participants are neutral on the statement. Additionally in instructional coach survey question #6, what do you believe is the best way to improve the PLC process, one of two (50%) participants reported the theme create teacher leaders. This suggests that there is a difference in how teachers lead in PLCs with one coach as compared to the other. These data suggest a need to build leadership capacity among teachers.

**Table 32**
*Instructional Coach Survey Question 14:Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In my PLC, we frequently learn from each other’s practice.</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 33**
*Instructional Coach Survey Question 15:Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers frequently take on leadership roles within the PLC.</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to instructional coach survey question #16, *teachers plan the majority of their instruction and tasks*. One of two (50%) participants strongly agreed with the statement. One of two (50%) participants were neutral on the statement. This suggests that the majority of participants see value in PLCs and that there is a basic level of acceptance as SES, again, a strong foundation to take PLCs to the next level.

**Table 34**  
*Instructional Coach Survey Question 16: Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers plan the majority of their instruction and tasks.</td>
<td>1/2 50%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1/2 50%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Administrator surveys.**

The final set of surveys that are up for review are administrator surveys. Three out of three (100%) administrators participated in the survey. The survey contained a combination of two multiple-choice responses, four open-ended and twelve scaled responses. This subsection will include a breakdown of each question as well as tables to display the survey results.

In response to administrator survey question #1, *how many years have you been in education*, one of three (33.33%) participants reported having four to ten years of experience. One of three (33.33%) participants reported having eleven to fifteen years of experience. One of three (33.33%) participants reported having sixteen years or more of experience as an educator. This suggests that these data reflected herein is that of an
experienced educator, and may have provided a deep and knowledgeable perspective that allowed me to synthesize information in a more meaningful way.

Table 35
*Administrator Survey Question 1: How many years have you been in education?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
<th>Participant(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 3</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 10</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16+</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to administrator survey question #2, *how long have you participated in the PLC process*, one of three (33.33%) participants reported having two to five years of experience. One of three (33.33%) participants reported having six to ten years of experience. One of three (33.33%) participants reported have eleven or more years of experience. In considering administrator survey question #1, these data tell me that the years of experience for participant 1 and 2 are consistent with the administrator’s years of experience. Participant 3 has fewer years of experience with a PLC than he/she has years of experience in education.

Table 36
*Administrator Survey Question 2: How long have you participated in the PLC process?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
<th>Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I did not participate.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 +</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to administrator survey question #3, *what is working well in your PLCs*, there were three themes (time, communication, and teacher claim membership) reported. Three of three (100%) participants reported the time provided working well.
Two of three (66.67%) participants reported communication as working well. One of three (33.33%) participants reported teachers claiming membership to PLC as working well. However, in teacher survey question #4, *what is not working well in your PLC*, nine of twenty-one (42.86%) participants reported time as not working well. This suggests there are some things about the PLC time that is working well, and some things that are not working. It may be beneficial for the administrators to find out from each PLC which things are not working so that they can fix the issue.

In response to administrator survey question #4, *what is not working well in your PLCs*, there were four themes (diving deep, analyzing data and applying, equity of voice, and understanding PLCs) reported. Three of three (100%) participants reported diving deep as not working well. Two of three (66.67%) participants reported analyzing and applying data as not working well. One of three (33.33%) participants reported equity of voice as not working well. One of three (33.33%) participants reported understanding PLCs as not working well. In response to instructional coach survey question #6, *what do you believe is the best way to improve the PLC process*, the most reported theme with two of two (100%) participants, was to provide time for data analysis. This suggests that there is a need to improve in analyzing and applying data. This also seems to correlate with three of three (100%) administrators, who reported diving deep as not working well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 37</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrator Survey Question 3: What is working well in your PLC?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response Category</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Claim Membership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to administrator survey question #4, *what is not working well in your PLCs*, there were four themes (diving deep, analyzing data and applying, equity of voice, and understanding PLCs) reported. Three of three (100%) participants reported diving deep as not working well. Two of three (66.67%) participants reported analyzing and applying data as not working well. One of three (33.33%) participants reported equity of voice as not working well. One of three (33.33%) participants reported understanding PLCs as not working well. In response to instructional coach survey question #6, *what do you believe is the best way to improve the PLC process*, the most reported theme with two of two (100%) participants, was to provide time for data analysis. This suggests that there is a need to improve in analyzing and applying data. This also seems to correlate with three of three (100%) administrators, who reported diving deep as not working well.
Part of diving deep with regard to student learning is analyzing and applying data in a myriad of context.

**Table 38:**

*Administrator Survey Question 4: What is not working well in your PLC?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diving Deep</td>
<td>3 of 3 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing Data &amp; Applying</td>
<td>2 of 3 (66.67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>equity of Voice</td>
<td>1 of 3 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding PLCs</td>
<td>1 of 3 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to administrator survey question #5, *what is the biggest challenge with implementing the PLC process*, there were four themes (getting teachers to do the heavy lifting, implementation, measuring progress, and building content knowledge) reported. Two of three (66.67%) participants reported getting teacher to do the heavy lifting as the biggest challenge. One of three (33.33%) participants reported implementation as the biggest challenge. One of three (33.33%) participants reported measuring progress as the biggest challenge. One of three (33.33%) participants reported building content knowledge as the biggest challenge. While none of the themes reported by administrators were themes reported by instructional coaches or teachers, they appear to be valid in that they offer a system thinking approach. A perspective that is distinct from that of the teacher and coach. If these themes (getting teachers to do the heavy lifting, implementation, measuring progress, and building content knowledge) are not adequately addressed, the work within PLCs will remain surface level and SES will fail to realize the growth in student achievement that it is hoping to obtain.
In response to administrator survey question #6, *what do you believe is the best way to improve the PLC process*, there were three themes (define roles and expectations, continue to build, and focus on results) reported. Three of three (100%) participants reported define role and expectations as the best way to improve. Three of three (100%) participants reported continue to build as the best way to improve. Three of three (100%) reported focus on results as the best way to improve. These data is consistent with instructional coach survey data question #6, *what do you believe is the best way to improve the PLC process*, where two of two (100%) participants reported time for data analysis as the best way to improve the PLC process. These data suggest a relationship between administrators wanting to focus on results and coaches thinking that providing time to analyze data is the best way to improve the PLC process. Bridging the two concepts could lead to a more effective PLC, as it would be more aligned to DuFour et al. (2006) vision for having a results orientation.

Table 39  
*Administrator Survey Question 5: What is the biggest challenge with implementing the PLC process?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Do Heavy Lifting</td>
<td>2 of 3 (66.67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>1 of 3 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measuring Progress</td>
<td>1 of 3 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Content Knowledge</td>
<td>1 of 3 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 40  
*Administrator Survey Question 6: What do you believe is the best way to improve the PLC process?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protecting Time</td>
<td>2 of 2 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>2 of 2 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create Teacher Leaders</td>
<td>1 of 2 (50%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Administrator survey questions seven through eighteen are scaled responses. In response to administrator survey question #7, *the goals and expectations for my participation in the PLC process has been clearly articulated*, three of three (100%) participants strongly agreed with the statement. These data suggest that much like instructional coaches, administrators are clear on what their role is within PLCs.

**Table 41**
*Administrator Survey Question 7: Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The goals and expectations for my participation within the PLC process has been clearly articulated.</td>
<td>3/3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to administrator survey question #8, *in the PLC, my job is to function as a learning member*. Two of three (66.67%) participants agreed with the statement. One of three (33.33%) participants strongly agreed with this statement. This suggests that the administrators recognize their role is multi-faceted and there is value in engaging in the process like any other member. Administrators are not expected to have all the answers. This is the strength of collaboration within effective PLCs.
In response to administrator survey question #9, teachers and coaches appreciate when I contribute to the PLC discussion/problem solving. Three of three (100%) participants agreed with the statement. This suggests that administrators are aware of their value within PLCs.

Table 42
Administrator Survey Question 8:Scaled Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the PLC process, my job is to function as a learning member.</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to administrator survey question #10, I am consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs, two of three (66.67%) participants reported they agreed with the statement. One of three (33.33%) participants is neutral on the statement. This suggests that administrators, for the most part view themselves as prepared for PLCs.

Table 43
Administrator Survey Question 9:Scaled Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and coaches appreciate when I contribute to the PLC discussions/problem solving.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3/3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to administrator survey question #11, *teachers are consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs*, two of three (66.67%) participants disagreed with the statement. One of three (33.33%) participants was neutral on the statement. Similarly, on instructional coach survey question #9, *teachers are consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs*, one of two (50%) participants agreed with the statement. One of two (50%) participants disagreed with the statement. These data suggest that teachers are not always prepared for PLCs, and that an opportunity for growth exists.

**Table 44**
*Administrator Survey Question 10: Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to administrator survey question #11, *teachers are consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs*, two of three (66.67%) participants disagreed with the statement. One of three (33.33%) participants was neutral on the statement. Similarly, on instructional coach survey question #9, *teachers are consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs*, one of two (50%) participants agreed with the statement. One of two (50%) participants disagreed with the statement. These data suggest that teachers are not always prepared for PLCs, and that an opportunity for growth exists.

**Table 45**
*Administrator Survey Question 11: Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to administrator survey question #12, *coaches are consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs*, one of three (33.33%) participants agreed with the statement. One of three (33.33%) participants were neutral on the statement. One of three (33.33%) participants disagreed with the statement. These data is inconsistent with the survey data from the instructional coaches. When the instructional coaches were asked in survey question #8, *I am consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs*, two of two (100%) participants strongly agreed with the statement. This suggests that the administrators and coaches have two different perceptions about the coaches’ level of preparedness. This illustrates a need for improvement.

**Table 46**
*Administrator Survey Question 12: Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coaches are consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs.</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to administrator survey question #13, *the hard work is evenly shared among all members of the PLC*, two of three (66.67%) participants disagreed with this statement. One of three (33.33%) participants were neutral on this statement. These responses are similar to instructional coach survey question #11, *the hard work is evenly shared among all members of the PLC*, where one of two (50%) participants agreed with the statement. One of two (50%) participants disagreed with the statement. These data suggests that the concept of collaboration and shared leadership need to be addressed
within PLCs.

Table 47
Administrator Survey Question 13:Scaled Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The hard work is evenly shared among all members of the PLC.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33.33% 66.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to administrator survey question #14, the PLC process is beneficial for teachers and students, two of three (66.67%) participants strongly agreed with the statement. One of three (33.33%) participants agreed with this statement. This response is consistent with instructional coach survey question #12, the PLC process is beneficial for teachers and students, where two of two (100%) participants strongly agreed with this statement. This suggests that the learning community as a whole recognize some value in PLCs.

Table 48
Administrator Survey Question 14:Scaled Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The PLC process is beneficial for teachers and students.</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>66.67% 33.33%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to administrator survey question #15, *teachers consistently contribute to the PLC*, two of three (66.67%) participants disagree with the statement. One of three (33.33%) participants agreed with the statement. Additionally on instructional coach survey question #10, *teachers consistently contribute to the PLC process*, two of two (100%) participants agreed with this statement. These data suggest that there is a difference in perception regarding teachers contributing to PLCs. This difference could exist due to administrators and coaches having different expectations regarding teachers contributing in PLCs. This difference could also exist because administrators attend PLCs less frequently than coaches do. This was highlighted when teachers were asked in surveys and interviews, *what is the best way to improve PLCs*, and teachers reported administrator support as a theme.

Table 49
*Administrator Survey Question 15: Scaled Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers consistently contribute to the PLC.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>33.33%</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>66.67%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to administrator survey question #16, *in my PLC, we frequently learn from each other’s practice*, two of three (66.67%) participants disagreed with the statement. One of three (33.33%) participants strongly agreed with the statement. This suggests that the majority of participants are able to take something from another
teacher’s practice and apply it to theirs for the betterment of their students. This is a good start to building authentic collaboration.

Table 50
Administrator Survey Question 16: Scaled Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In my PLC, we frequently learn from each other’s practice.</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to administrator survey question #17, teachers frequently take a leadership role within PLCs, two of three (66.67%) participants agreed with the statement. One of three (33.33%) participants disagreed. Similarly, when instructional coaches were asked the same question on instructional coach survey #15, teachers frequently take a leadership role within PLCs, one of two (50%) participants agreed and one of two (50%) participants were neutral. One of three (33.33%) participants disagreed with the statement. However, when teachers were asked the same question on teacher survey question #14, I consider myself a leader within my PLC, ten of twenty-one were neutral on the statement. These data suggest, that the leadership role among teachers within PLCs at SES is unclear, and that there is a need to define and encourage these roles.
In response to administrator survey question #18, teachers plan the majority of instruction and tasks, two of three (66.67%) participants agreed with the statement. One of three (33.33%) participants disagreed with the statement. When instructional coaches were asked the same question on instructional coach survey #16, teachers plan the majority of their instruction and tasks, one of two (50%) participants strongly agreed and one of two (50%) participants were neutral on the statement. These data suggest that some members of the PLC plan the majority of their task, while other members do not. This question does not specifically ask whether teachers plan the majority of their tasks collaboratively, or within PLCs.

Table 51
Administrator Survey Question 17:Scaled Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers frequently take a leadership role within PLCs.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td></td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 52
Administrator Survey Question 18:Scaled Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers plan the majority of their instruction and task.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td></td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviews.

All interview questions will be up for review because teachers, instructional coaches and administrators had the same questions. The shortest interview was 9 minutes with the longest interview 23 minutes, and an overall average interview time of 12 minutes. Seven of fifty (14%) teachers participated in the interviews. Three of three (100%) instructional coaches participated in the interviews. Two of three administrators (66.67%) participated in the interview process. This subsection will include a breakdown of each interview question as well as a comparison among participant groups using tables to display the survey results.

In response to interview question #1, what is working well in your PLC, there were four themes (collaboration, sharing of ideas, time and focus on learning) reported by teachers as working well. Three of seven (42.86%) participants reported collaboration. Three of seven (42.86%) participants reported sharing of ideas. Three of seven (42.86%) reported time. One of seven (14.29%) reported a focus on learning as working well. This suggests that some teachers are finding a benefit within PLCs. Each participant reported a theme. This provides SES with something to build upon.

In response to the same question, there were two themes (teachers being prepared and administrative support) reported by instructional coaches as working well. Two of three (66.67%) participants reported teachers being prepared as working well. One of three (33.33%) participants reported administrative support as working well. This suggests that the coaches are pleased with the level in which teachers are coming prepared to PLCs and administration support. This finding could be a result of the current
PLC model where coaches lead the PLCs and provide teachers with tasks and the instructional sequence for those tasks.

In response to the same question, there were two themes (collaboration and focus on learning) reported by administrators as working well. One of two (50%) participants reported collaboration as working well. One of two (50%) participants reported a focus on learning as working well. In comparing these data, it suggests that a focus on learning is working well in PLCs. This theme was reported by all participant groups through either survey or interview data. This factor validates this theme. Additionally, collaboration, sharing of ideas and time are the highest reported themes by a participant group, which suggest that SES has a practice of meeting and sharing ideas at a designated time.

Table 53

*Teacher Interview Question 1: What is working well in your PLC?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>3 of 7 (42.86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of Ideas</td>
<td>3 of 7 (42.86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>3 of 7 (42.86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on Learning</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 54

*Instructional Coach Interview Question 1: What is working well in your PLC?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Being Prepared</td>
<td>2 of 3 (66.67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
<td>1 of 3 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 55

*Administrator Interview Question 1: What is working well in your PLC?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>1 of 2 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on Learning</td>
<td>1 of 2 (50%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to interview question #2, *what is not working well in your PLC*, there were five themes (managing conflict, collaboration, diving deeper, teachers not carrying out plans, everything is great) reported by teachers as not working well. Three of seven (42.86%) participants reported managing conflict. One of seven (14.29%) participants reported collaboration. One of seven (14.29%) participants reported diving deeper. One of seven (14.29%) participants reported the organization of PLCs. One of seven (14.29%) reported teachers not carrying out plans as not working well. One of seven (14.29%) participants reported everything is great. This suggests that teachers are having difficulty within in planning managing conflict, which affects their ability to collaborate. Therefore, it may be beneficial for the team to receive some tools on how they can effectively manage conflict.

In response to the same question, there were four themes (managing conflict, defined roles, coming prepared, focus during testing season) reported by instructional coaches as not working well. Two of three (66.67%) participants reported managing conflict as not working well. One of three (33.33%) participants reported defined roles as not working well. One of three (33.33%) participants reported coming prepared as not working well. One of three (33.33%) participants reported focus during testing season as not working well. This suggests that coaches along with the teachers can benefit from having tools on how they can effectively manage conflict. Furthermore, the two additional themes reported, defined roles and coming prepared, suggests a need for the PLC to have clear expectations. Administration can help to reinforce those expectations.

In response to the same question, there were two themes (understanding PLCs and analyzing data and applying) reported by administrators as not working well. One of two
(50%) participants reported understanding PLCs as not working well. One of two (50%) participants reported analyzing data and applying as not working well. In synthesizing these data, there seems to be a correlation between diving deeper, a theme reported by teachers, and analyzing and applying data. This suggests that the PLC may be able to better meet the needs of teachers and students by diving deeper through analyzing data and applying the changes.

Table 56
Teacher Interview Question 2: What is not working well in your PLC?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing Conflict</td>
<td>3 of 7 (42.86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diving Deeper</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of PLC</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Not Carrying Out Plans</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything is Great</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 57
Instructional Coach Interview Question 2: What is not working well in your PLC?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>2 of 3 (66.67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defined Roles</td>
<td>1 of 3 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparedness</td>
<td>1 of 3 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus During Testing</td>
<td>1 of 3 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 58
Administrator Interview Question 2: What is not working well in your PLC?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding PLCs</td>
<td>1 of 2 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing Data and Applying</td>
<td>1 of 2 (50%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to interview question #3, what is the greatest challenge in implementing PLCs, there were four themes (managing conflict, time, transfer, and diving deeper) reported by teachers as the greatest challenge in implementing PLCs. Five
of seven (71.43%) participants reported managing conflict. One of seven (14.29%) participants reported time. One of seven (14.29%) participants reported transfer. One of seven (14.29%) participants reported diving deeper. The themes of managing conflict and diving deeper are consistent with teacher interview question #2, *what is not working well in the PLC*. This suggest that the things that are not working well may be improved by addressing these challenges. This data point validates the suggestion for interview question #2, which suggests providing the members of the PLC with tools on how to navigate conflict productively and to increase data analysis and application within PLCs to allow the members to dive deeper.

In response to the same question, there were three themes (managing conflict, buy-in, and time) reported by instructional coaches as the greatest challenge in implementing PLCs. Two of three (66.67%) participants reported managing conflict as the greatest challenge. One of three (33.33%) participants reported buy-in. One of three (33.33%) participants reported time as the greatest challenge. This suggests that the coaches along with teachers are in need of tools on how to manage conflict. This also suggests that the team may need to collectively evaluate how they are using the time within PLCs and that could lead to an increase value or buy-in for the members of the PLC.

In response to the same question, there was one theme (time) reported by administrators as not working well. Two of two (100%) participants reported time as the greatest challenge in implementing PLCs. Each participant group (teachers, coaches, and administrators) reported this theme. This suggests that this is a challenge that will need to
be addressed. Perhaps a starting point would be to identify all of the issues as it relates to time and develop viable solutions.

Table 59
*Teacher Interview Question 3: What is the greatest challenge in implementing PLCs?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing Conflict</td>
<td>5 of 7 (71.43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diving Deeper</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 60
*Instructional Coach Interview Question 3: What is the greatest challenge in implementing PLCs?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing Conflict</td>
<td>2 of 3 (66.67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy-In</td>
<td>1 of 3 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>1 of 3 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 61
*Administrator Interview Question 3: What is the greatest challenge in implementing PLCs?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>2 of 2 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to interview question #4, *what ideas do you have to address those challenges*, there were four themes (administration support, coming prepared, content support, and diving deeper) reported by teachers as ideas to address the challenges. Two of seven (28.57%) participants reported administration support as an idea to address the challenges. Two of seven (28.57%) participants reported coming prepared as an idea to address the challenges. One of seven (14.29%) participants reported content support. One of seven (14.29%) participants reported diving deeper. One of seven (14.29%) participants did not provide a response to this question. This suggests that teachers
believe that the PLC process can be improved by everyone coming prepared and administration support. In reviewing the content of the interviews, teachers are suggesting administrator support in terms of physical presence, consistently sitting in PLCs.

In response to the same question, there were two themes (equity of voice and protecting time) reported by instructional coaches as ideas to address the challenges. Two of three (66.67%) participants reported equity of voice as an idea to address the challenges. One of three (33.33%) participants reported protecting time as an idea to address the challenges. The teachers and coaches reported completely different themes. This suggests that the coaches, acting as PLC facilitators, may have different needs than the teachers within PLCs. These data further suggest that there is a need for everyone to be heard and equally valued. Additionally, it may be beneficial for administration to safeguard the time for PLCs to prevent interruptions and support an intentional focus.

In response to the same question, the were two themes (come prepared and protect time) reported by administrators as an idea to address the challenges. Two of two (100%) participants reported coming prepared as an idea to address the challenge. Two of two (100%) participants reported protecting time as an idea to address the challenge. Both administrators who participated in the interview identified the same themes. This suggests that there is in fact a need for PLC members to come prepared and for the PLC time to be protected. This suggestion is further substantiated by the themes reported by the coaches (protect time) and teachers (come prepared).
Table 62
Teacher Interview Question 4: What ideas do you have to address those challenges?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration Support</td>
<td>2 of 7 (28.57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come Prepared</td>
<td>2 of 7 (28.57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Support</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diving Deeper</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 63
Instructional Coach Interview Question 4: What ideas do you have to address those challenges?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equity of Voice</td>
<td>2 of 3 (66.67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect Time</td>
<td>1 of 3 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 64
Administrator Interview Question 4: What ideas do you have to address those challenges?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Come Prepared</td>
<td>2 of 2 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect Time</td>
<td>2 of 2 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to interview question #5, what do you believe is the purpose and goal of a PLC, there were four themes (collaborate, gain competence, calibrate, and improve) reported by teachers as the purpose and goal of a PLC. Five of seven (71.43%) participants reported to collaborate as the purpose and goal of a PLC. Four of seven (57.14%) participants reported to gain competence as the purpose and goal of a PLC. Four of seven (57.14%) participants reported to calibrate as the purpose and goal of a PLC. Two of seven (28.57%) participants reported to improve as the purpose and goal of a PLC. These data illustrate that at least one other teacher shares each theme reported. This suggests that there is some commonality about the purpose and goal of a PLC. The administration at SES would benefit from evaluating the teachers’ understanding of the purpose and goals of a PLC.
and comparing it to their vision and understanding. SES could then use that information to clarify and align actions to the intended purpose and goal.

In response to the same question, there were three themes (to collaborate, to plan instruction, and to calibrate) reported by instructional coaches as the purpose and goal of a PLC. Three of three (100%) participants reported to collaborate as the purpose and goal of a PLC. Three of three (100%) participants reported to plan instruction as the purpose and goal of a PLC. One of three (33.33%) participants reported to calibrate as the purpose and goal of a PLC. All of the coaches reported to collaborate and to plan quality instruction for students. This suggests that this belief influences their actions as a facilitator of planning, and that perhaps this is what was communicated to them as the purpose and goal in some capacity. Additionally, a few themes (collaborate and calibrate) were shared among coaches and teachers.

In response to the same question, there were two themes (teacher growth and student growth) reported by administrators as the purpose and goal of a PLC. Two of two (100%) participants reported teachers to grow and learn as the purpose and goal of a PLC. Two of two (100%) participants reported students to grow and learn as the purpose and goal of a PLC. Both administrators who participated in the interview identified the same themes. This suggests that the administrative team have a common understanding of the purpose and goal of a PLC.

Table 65
Teacher Interview Question 5: What is the purpose and goal of a PLC?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate</td>
<td>5 of 7 (71.43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain Competence</td>
<td>4 of 7 (57.14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calibrate</td>
<td>4 of 7 (57.14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve</td>
<td>2 of 7 (28.57%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to interview question #6, does your PLC meet these goals, why or why not, seven of seven (100%) participants reported yes and that the PLC did meet the goals. There were five themes (work toward common goal, share ideas, focus on learning, work together effectively, and drives what happens in the class) reported by teachers as the reason why the PLCs met their goals. Three of seven (42.86%) participants reported that the PLC was working toward a common goal as the reason. One of seven (14.29%) participants reported sharing ideas as a reason. One of seven (14.29%) participants reported a focus on learning as a reason. One of seven (14.29%) participants reported working together effectively as a reason. One of seven (14.29%) participants reported PLCs as driving what happened in the class as a reason why PLCs met its goals. Two of seven (28.57%) participants reported that the PLC does meet its goals but did not provide a reason. This suggests that the theme, working toward a common goal, may be something valued among teachers, and it may a necessary component in moving forward.

In response to the same question, two of three (66.67%) instructional coach participants reported that the PLC was a work in progress. One of three (33.33%) instructional coach participants reported yes, that the PLC did meet its goals. There were

---

**Table 66**

*Instructional Coach Interview Question 5: What is the purpose and goal of a PLC?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate</td>
<td>3 of 3 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan Instruction</td>
<td>3 of 3 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calibrate</td>
<td>1 of 3 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 67**

*Administrator Interview Question 5: What is the purpose and goal of a PLC?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Grow and Learn</td>
<td>2 of 2 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Grow and Learn</td>
<td>2 of 2 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
two themes (focus on learning and opportunity for growth) reported by instructional coaches as the reason why the PLC met its goal. One of three (33.33%) participants reported a focus on learning as the reason why the PLC is meeting its goals. Two of three (66.67%) participants reported an opportunity for growth as the reason the PLC was a work in progress with regard to meeting its goals. This suggests that the actions within the PLC, at times, may not be aligned to the purpose and goals of the PLC.

In response to the same question, two of two (100%) administrators reported that the PLCs were a work in progress with regard to meeting its goals. There were two themes (not yet a community of learners and not a cycle of ongoing evaluation) reported by administrators as the reason why PLCs were a work in progress. One of two (50%) participants reported not yet a community of learners as the reason. One of two (50%) participants reported that the PLC does not have a cycle of ongoing evaluation as the reason for being a work in progress with regard to PLCs meeting its goals. This suggests that some strategies and actions are needed to ensure that PLCs are meeting its goals.

Table 68
Teacher Interview Question 6: Does your PLC meet these goals?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Yes Response Rate</th>
<th>Work in Progress Response Rate</th>
<th>No Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common Goal</td>
<td>3 of 7 (42.86%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share Ideas</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on Learning</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Together</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

97
In response to interview question #7, what supports do you need to effectively engage in the PLC process at your school, there were eight themes (protected time, administration support, feedback, a collaborative team, have it just need to use it, printing, accountability, and respect) reported by teachers as the supports needed to engaged effectively in the PLC process. Three of seven (42.86%) participants reported protected time. Two of seven (28.57%) participants reported administration support. One of seven (14.29%) participants reported feedback. One of seven (14.29%) participants reported...
reported a collaborative team. One of seven (14.29%) participants reported they have the
supports they need and that they just need to use it. One of seven (14.29%) participants
reported printing. One of seven (14.29%) participants reported accountability. One of
seven (14.29%) participants reported respect as the support needed to engage effectively
in the PLC. This suggests that teachers vary greatly in their need for support. It will be
beneficial for the administration team to survey teachers periodically to determine their
needs and then find ways to support them as they engage effectively in the PLC process.

In response to the same question, there were three themes (administration support,
protected time, and accountability) reported by instructional coaches as the supports
needed to engage effectively in the PLC process. Three of three (100%) participants
reported administration support. Two of three (66.67%) participants reported protected
time. One of three (33.33%) participants reported accountability as the supports needed to
engage effectively in the PLC process. Although, there were three different themes
(administration support, protected time, and accountability) reported by instructional
coaches, they are all related in that administration has a role in each of those themes. This
suggests that the administrative team at SES has a critical role in providing supports to all
PLC participants.

In response to the same question, there were three themes (time to be present,
time to monitor for transfer, and have it just need to use it) reported by administrators as
the supports needed to engage effectively in the PLC process. One of two (50%) participants
reported time to be present. One of two (50%) participants reported time to monitor for transfer. One of two (50%) participants reported they have the supports they
need, and they just need to use them to engage effectively in the PLC process. This
suggests that administration would benefit from collaborating with one another and
determining how they can use the available resources to provide time to participate in
planning and monitor for transfer.

Table 71
*Teacher Interview Question 7: What supports do you need to engage effectively in
the PLC process?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protected Time</td>
<td>3 of 7 (42.86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration Support</td>
<td>2 of 7 (28.57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Team</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have It, Just Need to Use It</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>1 of 7 (14.29%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 72
*Instructional Coach Interview Question 7: What supports do you need to engage
effectively in the PLC process?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration Support</td>
<td>3 of 3 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protected Time</td>
<td>2 of 3 (66.67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>1 of 3 (33.33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 73
*Administrator Interview Question 7: What supports do you need to engage
effectively in the PLC process?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time to be Present</td>
<td>1 of 2 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to Monitor</td>
<td>1 of 2 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have It, Just Need to Use It</td>
<td>1 of 2 (50%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student achievement data.

SES school grade is based on formula that includes student achievement based on
the percentage of students proficient in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics
in third, fourth, and fifth grades. The formula also includes the percentage of students
proficient in Science in fifth grade, overall learning gains in ELA and Math, and learning
gains of students in the lowest quartile in ELA and Math. Collectively, these items produce overall points. The percentage of points earned are then used to determine the school grade. While these data do not exclusively paint the picture of the quality of instruction that has taken place at SES, it does however provide some insight.

At SES, the student achievement data reveals that there has been a steady decline in student achievement for the past three school years. See Table 74 for specific details regarding the SES’s overall performance in third, fourth, and fifth grades. In the percentage of students meeting proficiency or above in ELA, there has been an overall 3% decline from the 2015-2016 school year to the 2017-2018 school year. In the percentage of students meeting proficiency or above in Mathematics, there has been an overall 4% decline from the 2015-2016 school year to the 2017-2018 school year. In the percentage of students meeting proficiency or above in Science, there has been an overall 8% decline from the 2015-2016 school year to the 2017-2018 school year. This suggests that SES has failed to make the instructional impact needed to increase the percentage of students scoring at the proficiency level or above. This further suggests that teachers are not getting what they need within PLCs to adequately meet the needs of the students they serve.

Additionally, in assessing learning gains from the 2015-2016 school year to the 2017-2018 school year, learning gains declined in every category except Science, where there was a 1% increase. The decline in learning gains included ELA, Mathematics, lowest quartile in ELA, and the lowest quartile in Mathematics. The greatest decline was within the learning gains, specifically the lowest quartile in ELA, with a 33% decline moving from 52% during the 2015-2016 school year to 19% during the 2017-2018 school
year. SES earned 34% of the total possible points, earning a D as the school grade, two points away from an F. This suggests that not only does SES need to address its proficiency issue, less than half of a grade level earning proficiency; we also have issues with growing students' knowledge from their current level of performance at the beginning of the school year to the end as evidence on the state assessment.

*Figure 1.* Sunshine Elementary School overall student performance data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SES Overall Performance</th>
<th>2015-2016</th>
<th>2016-2017</th>
<th>2017-2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELA Achievement</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Achievement</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Achievement</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELA Learning Gains</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Learning Gains</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELA Lowest Quartile LG</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Lowest Quartile LG</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Points</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Points Earned</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Grade</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 contained an average of the overall performance for the school in each grade. Figure 2 provides a comparison of the percentage of students who demonstrated proficiency on the state assessment per grade level over the past two school years. In third grade, there was a 13% decline in Math, moving from 54% proficient in 2016-2017 to 41% proficient in 2017-2018. In third grade, there was an 8% decline in ELA, moving from 49% proficient in 2016-2017 to 41% proficient in 2017-2018. In fourth grade, there was a 1% decline in Math, moving from 50% proficient in 2016-2017 to 49% proficient in 2017-2018. In fourth grade, there was a 10% increase in ELA, moving from 34% proficient in 2016-2017 to 44% proficient in 2017-2018. In fifth grade, there was a 6% increase in Math, moving from 34% proficient in 2016-2017 to 40% proficient in 2017-
2018. In fifth grade, there was a 9% decline in ELA, moving from 42% proficient in 2016-2017 to 33% proficient in 2017-2018. Finally, in looking at a grade level as they moved up to the next grade level the following year, there was not a single group that increased. These data suggests that the inability to move students from year-to-year or increase proficiency is not limited to just one grade level. This further suggests that there is an instructional gap that has led to an achievement gap in third, fourth and fifth grades.

![Proficiency Comparison by Grade Level in Math and ELA](image)

*Figure 2. Sunshine Elementary School overall proficiency comparison by grade level*

**Organizational Changes**

Based on the data, the PLCs at SES are in need of an organizational change. The student achievement data alone speaks volumes. Looking at the 2016-2017 school year, student achievement data has declined. No single grade level was above 49% proficiency in ELA, Math or Science. In other words, on the highest rated performance measure, 51% of students did not meet proficiency. Furthermore, the students declined in all categories for learning gains, which means that under the current learning conditions, more than 50% of students are not retaining enough content to demonstrate mastery nor demonstrate an increase in knowledge. Proficiency equates to mastery of grade level standards, and
teachers are responsible for teaching students, thus, there is an inherent relationship between teacher practice, teacher competence and student learning outcomes. Consequently, in the larger educational context at SES, the issue is that there is a deficiency within this relationship.

In order to address the issue, SES would need to improve the effectiveness of PLCs so that there is an improvement in student learning for teachers and students. At SES, I would like to see PLCs utilized in a manner that will foster professional development for teachers and improve the quality of instruction and tasks for students that will lead to better student outcomes. I believe that there are four key strategies needed to bring about organizational change.

The first strategy is to develop a common language. Everyone needs to have the same understanding of PLCs and their role within the context of SES. This is necessary in working toward a common vision and goal, which is a part of developing a common language. The second strategy is to collectively develop and implement the plan. The plan should be directly aligned to the vision and goal. The third strategy is to provide ongoing support as the school community makes a concerted effort to implement the plan. Support will vary depending on the individual needs of PLC teams. Support could be time, resources, human capital or more. The fourth and final strategy is to monitor and adjust the plan as needed. It is not enough to design and roll out a plan, and hope for the best. At SES, we must ensure that our actions are producing the desired results, and when it is not, we must be willing to make informed decisions to adjust the course.

In synthesizing all of the data to include surveys, interviews and student achievement data, there were three key findings. The first finding is that the majority of
participants (teachers, coaches, and administrators) found PLCs beneficial and identified something as working well. The second finding is that the majority of participants (teachers, coaches and administrators) identified something as not working well and offered possible solutions to addressing challenges within the PLCs. The third finding is that PLCs have not produced a sizeable impact on student learning outcomes, as evidenced by student achievement data. These findings suggest that there is a need to align the PLCs at SES with DuFour et al. (2016) three big ideas – (1) focus on learning, (2) collaboration and collective responsibility, and (3) results orientation. While the data suggests that there are pockets of the three big ideas, it does not exist systemically. Therefore, organizational changes are necessary to produce effective PLCs at SES.

I selected this issue to address with organizational change because this is what I perceive as the most viable way to systemically impart change and positively influence student-learning outcomes. Several years prior as a teacher, I had the privilege of participating in a PLC through a district initiative that incorporated all of the suggested strategies that I have proposed as a solution to the issue, and that experience has been the single greatest positive experience in my professional career. This experience was so powerful because it was the first time in my career I began to see the value of collaboration and grew profoundly in competence and pedagogy.

This growth was evident in student performance. At the close of the school year, my team and I had moved from seventh in the district to second place based on the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency on the state assessment. This was extremely powerful, as all of the hard work had paid off and it validated the power of collaboration. I am confident that I would not have grown so deeply in such a short
period without this experience. I want to replicate this experience for teachers and students at SES.

Moreover, there is ample research that suggest that PLCs are a viable reform effort that can result in improved learning for students when teachers improve their learning, and the most critical practices are consistently implemented (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). Voelkel & Chrispeels (2017) identifies these practices as a shared vision and values, a strong collaborative culture, analyze student work for strengths and gaps, develop lesson and assessments jointly, and an intense focus on student learning and results. When the four strategies detailed are coupled with these high yield practices, it is my belief that teachers and students alike will inevitably reap the benefits.

Someone once said that the only thing that is constant is change. I would have to agree. As an educational leader, we are always trying to improve the conditions for which we educate the students we serve. In fact, Florida Department of Education (2011) require in the Florida Principal Leadership Standards that school leaders develop and implement an instructional framework that align effective instructional practices with student needs. Meeting this standard often requires two things, reflection and change. Change is no easy feat, it requires systemic thinking, planning and acting.

Fortunately, Wagner et al. (2006) provides school leaders with a framework, the 4 C’s, for improving teaching and learning. The 4 C’s stand for competencies, conditions, culture, and context. Using the 4 C’s approach, leaders develop a chart to detail the four areas based on the state of the school “as is.” Wagner et al. (2006) defines the 4 C’s as follows:

1. Competencies- the skills and knowledge that effect learning for students
2. Conditions- the external elements surrounding learning for students (ex: time, space, resource, etc.)
3. Culture- shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to students and learning
4. Context- the larger organizational systems within which we work and the skill demands students must meet

(Location 2537). The 4 C’s “as is” chart is used as a tool to help school leaders focus and think about the elements needed to effectively implement change (Wagner et al., 2006). The 4 C’s chart is to be completed based on the school’s current or “as is” state (see Appendix J). The other piece to this process is the “to be” chart (see Appendix K). This chart is reflective in that it details what the school leadership at SES is expecting to accomplish once the changes have been implemented successfully. The following sections will detail the current situation at SES based on the existing problem.

**Contexts.**

Increasingly, schools and districts are being held to high academic standards, SES is no different. “The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), now replaced by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), has focused educators on accountability for student achievement in low-income communities” (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010, Location 270). SES is one of three elementary schools that serve the city of Sunshine, Florida. However, SES is the only Title I school with a free and reduced lunch rate of ninety-one percent and a minority population of sixty-eight percent.

SES is relatively small with approximately seven hundred and fifty students for the 2017-18 school year, which is an increase of approximately 70 students from the prior
school year. During the 2014-15 school year, SES earned a “C” after earning an “F” during the 2013-14 school year. SES maintained a “C” for the next few years. During the 2017–2018 school year, there was a steep decline in the number of students demonstrating proficiency and learning gains on state assessments. This resulted in SES earning a “D” for the 2017-18, scoring just two points shy of an “F”. Scores dropped as much as nineteen percent in some categories. It was apparent that we needed to increase the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency on state assessments, and we knew that improving the quality of instruction was the route.

At SES, PLCs were used for common planning and to address instructional needs. However, the current structure relies primarily on instructional coaches for planning. Teachers do not exercise leadership in this area thereby creating vulnerabilities and a threat to instructional sustainability. According to Fullan (2008), schools are high in capacity if they continuously develop knowledge and skills while they attract and use resources wisely (p. 53). We need to increase teacher leadership in the area of collaborating, planning, instructional delivery and student learning. At SES, we need to further develop our human resources to build capacity and to provide for succession planning that will foster sustainable quality instruction.

**Culture.**

Culture is the shared beliefs and actions that are related to students and learning (Wagner et al., 2006, Location 2502). Culture is the way things are done (Reeves, 2009). At SES, we have a culture of compliance that was cultivated in response to being a District Accountability school. To an outsider looking in, it may appear that we have a culture of collaboration because teachers meet consistently, coaches are prepared to teach
the teachers and the teachers are ready to receive. Unfortunately, the cycle ends and repeats there. I would love to see it shift to a true collaborative culture whereby accountability is shared, and teachers provide more input. I would also like to see behaviors extend beyond responsibility and morph into ownership.

Teachers leading PLCs and organically providing more input will characterize a culture change. Teachers, coaches and administration should reflect on the cycle of teaching and learning and make adjustments based on the students’ needs rather than allowing the cycle of teaching and learning to be driven by pacing guides. This will allow us to go deeper rather than simply doing. Although there is a designated time for planning, this time is often interrupted by other required meetings and such.

Wagner et al. (2006) believe that change within the organization will change when the actions of school leaders change (Location 465). Subsequently, administration will have to protect this time and consistently report to common planning, and when they are there, they will need to be active participants. Teachers often say that wherever the work is being done, learning is occurring. This saying also rings true for the coach and teacher relationship. In our case, the coaches are doing all the work; therefore, they are also doing all the learning. If teachers are not learning, nor do they possess a deep level of instructional understanding in the content, they cannot create the optimal learning experiences for our students required to improve student achievement.

**Conditions.**

Conditions represent the arrangements of time, money and space that can be seen (Wagner et al., 2006). The current condition of SES suggests a need for change in the area of planning, instruction and delivery, and student learning. Common planning is a
part of the culture at SES. Teachers currently meet once per week for forty-five minutes where planning is facilitated by instructional coaches. Some teacher teams meet twice per week with the instructional coaches based on their needs. Teachers also participate in a full day of planning once a month to plan long-term. The teacher roles within planning vary based on the grade level teams. A few teams have designated roles such as scribe, timekeeper, researcher, and someone responsible for lesson plans.

Instructional coaches provide teachers with lessons and tasks during common planning, an expectation set by administration. During the planning session, coaches tell teachers the reasoning behind the lesson design, and how the lesson should be delivered to students. Teachers are rarely included in the development of lessons or tasks shared during common planning. Instructional coaches adjust the lessons based on their classroom observations and teacher feedback. Teachers also create tasks and lessons when a full week of lessons have not been discussed in planning. Administration sits in on planning sessions when they are not called out for other things. The role of the administration is to ensure that the non-negotiables for common planning are being enforced and to ensure that the focus of common planning is standards based.

**Competencies.**

Currently, teachers are dependent on the tasks provided to them by the instructional coaches, and have not demonstrated the ability to engage in a PLC as defined by DuFour et al. (2016). According to the survey data, teachers do not recognize themselves as leaders within their PLCs, a quality, in my experience, that supports collaboration and begets collective accountability. Coaches have taken a lead within PLCs and have engaged in the heavy lifting to include deconstructing the standards,
diving deeper within the content, processing the instructional limitations and misconceptions and then designing a task and instructional sequence based on this combined knowledge. As a result, coaches were continuously developing their skills and building their competence while teachers improved marginally at best.

Engaging teachers deeply in PLCs is a missed opportunity, especially since SES has a varied experience level and a high attrition rate. PLCs could be used to foster a culture of high expectations and a supportive learning environment for all learners, as this strengthens teachers’ commitments to their schools (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). By strengthening their commitment to the school, the hope is that they stay from year to year as we continuously provide resources to build their professional development and establish a culture of learning.

In reflecting on the competencies of administration, we failed to demonstrate the ability to enforce expectations and provide supports for teachers and coaches to shift the roles and responsibilities in common planning. One of the planning non-negotiables is that teachers show up prepared with materials ready to contribute to lesson development. Even when teachers show up with materials, their contribution is minimal out of habit and time. Administration struggled to enforce these concepts because our attendance was inconsistent and we were rarely able to attend planning. There was a disconnect between the verbal expectations and what administration supported the instructional coaches in doing. Reeves (2009) argue that the greatest obstruction to change is the deviation between what leaders say and actually do. As an administrative team, we must realize this and become more consistent in aligning our words, resources and actions.
After analyzing the data, a few questions remain. I noticed that during the interview and open-ended question on the surveys, the word collaboration was frequently used. I wonder if collaboration has been defined as an organization whether formally or informally, and if so, what does it mean at SES? Additionally, when interview participants were asked, what is the purpose and goal of a PLC, no one mentioned student learning. However, there were responses that included planning instruction. Do teachers view teaching and learning separate, and do they intentionally plan for both? Discovering the answer to this question could provide critical guidance to SES’s administration as they try to improve teaching and learning. According to Daresh & Lynch (2010), this shift in thinking has profound implications for schools because they began to understand that educating students extend beyond teaching them but also ensuring that they learn. This realization will shift the focus within PLCs and will require administration to provide support in making this shift.

My next steps would be to share these findings with the leadership team and present the framework for the organizational change plan. Collectively we would develop the details of this plan and begin to strategically implement the plan. We would then support the plan, monitor, and adjust the plan as needed. In addition, I believe it is imperative for school leaders to continuously develop their leadership capacity. Therefore, I would begin the necessary work to further develop as a transformative instructional leader, both individually and as a team, and then put the knowledge into practice.

Fink, Markholt, Copeland, & Michelson (2011), argues that expertise is required to improve teacher practice and learning. They go on to say that, expert leaders are
significantly more metacognitive in how they contrive next steps and act as leaders because they understand the dependent relationship between learning expertise and teaching expertise (Fink et al., 2011). If we, as school leaders, at SES can build individual and collective competence around teaching and learning, we stand the chance of positively impacting teacher practice by building expertise among the teachers. These next steps are ideal for strategically structuring PLCs and creating the optimal environment for all learners.

In order for this change plan to come to fruition, it will require all stakeholders to have a clear vision, understand his or her role, and commit to an action as it relates to the vision and goal. Therefore, collaboration would not be limited to the administrative team. It will require the input of all stakeholders. At SES, we would involve faculty and community members by first collecting their opinions regarding teaching and learning based on their role and stake through the administration of surveys. We would then educate the group based on facts, and then mobilize them around solutions, in a variety of settings. For example, collecting and analyzing information could take the form of a focus group, whereby small groups of individuals are presented with a problem of practice and the group engage in problem solving to determine a solution to the problem. Daresh & Lynch (2010) states that restricting the number of individuals in this process could maximize organizational efficiency, in that it values the resource of time and orients a solution.

It may be appropriate to engage community businesses in a session where they are brainstorming ideas as to how they can activate community resources to support standards based instruction. For faculty, collaboration could consist of a focus group that
brainstorm solutions for adopting the most viable curriculum based on data and the four arenas of change. Collaboration will take on various forms given the nature of the challenge. Together we would analyze the survey data, identify challenges, and propose possible solutions and actions pertinent to the change plan. As a larger school community, we will keep one another informed and meet periodically to ensure that our actions are aligned to the vision and goal. All community members must engage in an ongoing dialogue that will lead to a culture of transparency, while collectively addressing problems of practice if the school wants to be a true community of learning (Daresh & Lynch, 2010). Collaboration with faculty and community must lead to a deeper understanding and forward movement to be useful.

**Interpretation**

Collectively the results mean that the PLCS at SES are ineffective in meeting the professional development needs of the teachers and improving learning for students. The student achievement data alone demonstrates that the work within PLCs are not resulting in an increased learning for students. This evidence is not limited to one grade level. The lack of growth in ELA, Math, and Science is evident in each grade level that is assessed, third through fifth grades.

In contrast to the previous point, the results are not as clear when it comes to determining how effective the PLCs have been in increasing the competencies of teachers. This discovery required an analysis and synthesis of information. There is an integral relationship between teacher competence and student learning (Fink et al., 2011). Because of this relationship, it is not unreasonable to infer that students were unable to
grow because teachers did not grow. However, there are some data points from the surveys and interviews that conflict with this finding.

According to teacher surveys, 86% of survey participants agreed that overall PLCs were beneficial. On teacher surveys, 81% of teachers agreed they improved their instructional practice as result of PLCs. Also on teacher surveys, 76% agreed they had become more reflective as a result of PLCs. Finally, on teacher surveys 86% of teachers agreed they increased competence within their content area. If these survey results are true, then why did it not lead to an increase in student learning?

The teacher interviews results revealed that 57.14% of participants stated the purpose and goal of a PLC was to gain competence, and 28.57% said it was to improve. That being said, 0% mentioned to gain competence or to improve as the reason why their PLC met the goal of a PLC. When instructional coaches were asked if their PLC met the goals of a PLC 66.67% stated they were a work in progress because there were many opportunities for growth. Similarly, when administrators were asked if their PLCs met the purpose and goals of a PLC, 100% said that it was a work in progress because the members were not a community of learners just yet.

In total, these results mean that there is not a common understanding and goal of the PLCs at SES. This also means that if teachers are growing and building their practice and competence, it is not at the level to which researchers such as DuFour et al. (2016), Fink et al. (2011), Bambrick-Santoyo (2010), Miles & Frank (2008), Reeves (2009), would identify an indicator of a high-performing PLC. This however is an indicator that at SES, there is still much work to be done to help teachers develop professionally within PLCs.
The significance of these results is that there is a clear relationship between the professional development of teachers and student learning. The results are also significant because it has helped me to identify specific elements with the PLC process that need to be addressed. This is especially evident where there are clear conflicts in the data such as teachers stating that they are growing professionally while the student achievement data do not confirm this. We need to further understand what skills specifically teachers perceive they have grown in and if these skills are high yielding. For example, a teacher may say that they are now able to move more efficiently through a lesson plan template as a result of PLCs. This would not be a high-yielding strategy, but perhaps an example would be a teacher stating that after reading and conferring with students, they are now able to identify a deficit and provide students with specific scaffolds or strategies to overcome these deficits. The acquisition of these type of skills is what we need to occur within PLCs so that it will transfer to student learning.

I believe that the results turned out this way because there is a lack of common knowledge and goals around PLCs at SES. I think that the results also turned out this way because, within PLCs, we are repeatedly engaging in practices that reinforce our current state of teaching, which is not positively impactful. I also believe that the results turned out this way because at SES we are offering different PLC experiences based on the individuals, different experience levels, and the degrees of competence that make up the PLC. Each PLC provides a different perspective, not every PLC shares the same experiences. This is also true among the members within the same PLC. Generally speaking, people provide perspective based on their experiences, what they know and
what they have been told. The different experiences are further exacerbated by a lack of common purpose, vision, and goals.

Judgments

While the data produced some questions regarding the PLC process, I was able to make some judgements based on the responses to the survey and interview questions. The ineffectiveness of PLCs cannot be summed up to a single factor because schools are so complex by nature (Fink et al., 2011). In analyzing and comparing the results, I found this to be true of SES. There were some specific data points that allowed me to get answers to my research questions. In response to primary question #1, what do the stakeholders (teachers, coaches, and school administrators) who are involved in professional learning communities (PLCs) at SES report as working well in the PLC process, it was determined that collaboration, sharing of ideas and a common focus on learning were working well.

In response to primary question #2, what do the stakeholders (teachers, coaches, and school administrators) who are involved in professional learning communities (PLCs) at SES report as not working well in the PLC process, it was determined that there were several things not working well. Some things that were not working well include time, equity of voice, relevance, conflict management, diving deeper, and analyzing and applying data.

In response to primary question #3, what do the stakeholders (teachers, coaches, and school administrators) who are involved in professional learning communities report as the greatest challenges in the PLC process, time was determined to be the greatest challenge. Time was a challenge because the amount of time provided was never enough
to get all the things done the team wanted to accomplish. Time was a challenge because it was unprotected and other meetings often took precedence over this time and affected the ability of other members to collaborate when needed.

In response to primary question #4, *what do the stakeholders (teachers, coaches, and school administrators) who are involved in professional learning communities suggest as ways to improve the PLC process*, several suggestions for improvement were provided by various stakeholders. The following suggestions were made: define the roles and expectations, consistent administration participation, everyone coming prepared, focus on results, and ensure that the work is relevant.

In response to secondary question #1, *to what extent is the program effective in attaining its goals (to increase competence and increase the use of best practices among teachers in an effort to improve student achievement) according to the perceptions of its stakeholders (teachers, coaches, and school administrators)*, it was determined that program is ineffective in meeting these goals. The program was ineffective in meeting these goals because of a lack of positive impact on student learning that was evidenced by the student achievement data.

In response to secondary question #2, *what do stakeholders (teachers, coaches, and school administrators) perceive as the supports needed to engage effectively and continuously in a professional learning community*, it was determined that a variety of supports are needed to meet the individual and collective needs of individuals who participate in PLCs. Based on the participants interviewed, it was determined that administrative support, protected time, accountability, feedback, respect and a collaborative team. There was one teacher and one administrator who acknowledge
having all of the supports needed to engage effectively within a PLC, but recognized they need to use the supports provided.

There are both negative and positive results in this study. The negative aspects of the results are derived from a lack of change in practice. Ultimately, the function of PLCs are to advance teaching and learning, and when there is no evidence of this within PLCs, the PLC is ineffective. There are several schools claiming to engage in the work of PLCs, but fail to produce tangible results; rather these schools engage in work that neglect to deeply change school-wide practice and reinforce status quo behaviors (Fink et al., 2011). Based on my analysis of the data, this is the status of SES. Prior to the 2017-2018 school year, where it declined to a “D”, SES had maintained a “C” for three years by engaging in the same PLC practices. SES rested on the fact that those practices are what moved us from an F to a C status, but what we failed to realize is that those practices were incapable of sustaining us because we were not building capacity nor were we evolving our practice.

The positive aspect of these results rest in the culture of SES. SES currently has a culture of meeting to plan for teaching, and the majority of teachers, coaches, and administrators see value in this time. Although research says that this is not the full scope of an effective PLC, it is important enough to provide somewhat of a foundation for which a strong PLC culture can be developed. If teachers are already meeting and believe they are receiving something valuable from this time, it will be less of a shift to engage in collaborative practices that are structured, focused on learning, collaborative in nature, and results-oriented. In other words, having a strength is one less barrier we must
maneuver to reach the desired outcomes, increased competency among teachers and evidence of learning for students.

**Recommendations**

There are several things that should be done to bring about effective change. I believe however, that there is one major change that will be the difference maker and that is to change the nature of the work within PLCs. I would like the work within PLCs to be more purposeful, collaborative and focused on student learning. This work would take on a variety of forms but it should definitely include members of a PLC planning, jointly assessing student work and adapting instruction to provide quality instruction and high levels of student learning. Reeves (2009) presents the argument that in order to effectively teach students so that they learn, schools must diagnose their knowledge of the content, what they can do, and what they failed to grasp. This work will create a culture of public practice that will be beneficial to teachers as they readily share their knowledge with one another for the shared purpose of providing quality instruction and student learning. Developing public practice is essential because it is a catalyst for developing expertise (Fink et al., 2011). As a teacher, I had the privilege of engaging in these practices and my teaching and learning expertise grew exponentially in one school year. The key for my PLC was in understanding the nature of this work is a process. It was by planning, teaching, acting, and doing that we were able meet the goal of our PLC.

The organizational change that is required to change the work within PLCs is to change the focus within PLCs, strategically. DuFour et al. (2016) says that merely collaborating will not change schools, but engaging in the right work will. To move toward this shift, my first recommendation would be to frame the work. DuFour et al.
(2016) says that all of the work within PLCs should respond to the following questions:
(1) What is it that we want our students to know and be able to do? (2) How will we
know if each student has learned it? (3) How will we respond when some students do not
learn it? (4) How will we extend the learning for students who have demonstrated
proficiency (p. 59)? This framework will support the agenda within PLCs and the
members of the community will be intentional about recognizing their focus within the
PLC. It will serve as a guide and continuously call the focus of PLCs back to the
important work.

The second recommendation to focus on the right work would be to clarify the
work. Members of the community will be provided with the purpose of the PLC, the
reasons why they are engaging in this work, and the expectations around work (DuFour
et al, 2016). In addition to the things mentioned, part of clarifying the right work is being
explicit and explaining what this work will require. I have both witnessed and
participated in PLCs that contain a frame but lack clarification. This too leads to an
exercise of futility. Members of a PLC need to know, from the beginning, that they are
expected to work together, use an expanded repertoire of skills and resources to
positively impact student achievement (DuFour et al., 2016). Therefore, it is unacceptable
to go through the motions of collaborating in PLCs to then return to your classroom and
rely on your individual practice and expertise. This focus must be communicated
frequently and consistently.

The final recommendation would be to develop a timeline with the team for the
right work that will need to be carried out within PLCs. I believe that when members are
included in the development of that work, they are much more likely to commit to it.
Fullan (2008) says, “when peers interact purposefully, their expectations of one another create positive pressure to accomplish goals important to the group” (p. 63). Therefore, we must recognize the important of inclusion to the goal, and make a concerted effort to incorporate it strategically.

According to DuFour and Fullan (2013) using evidence of student work as opposed to simply gathering it, is the right work that will lead to school improvement. Based on the collective data, SES need to incorporate the right work to bring about meaningful change. I understand that a single strategy absent of other best practices will not return the desired results. Connecting my experiences to the research of DuFour et al. (2016) and Fullan (2008), I believe that this change is most significant. Therefore, it is my recommendation to focus on the right work within PLCs and continuously monitor the progress as it relates to the goal.

CHAPTER FIVE: TO-BE FRAMEWORK

Introduction

One of the factors that influenced this program evaluation was my overwhelmingly positive experience in a district initiative known as the Innovative Professional Development (iPD) program through lesson study. Essentially the program was a team of teachers, who taught the same grade level and content, engaging in a professional learning community (PLC) by incorporating the lesson study cycle. The ideas was that by engaging in this work, professional development would be innovative in that it met the varying needs of the professionals within the learning community. The research of the literature was particularly important because it helped to establish a framework around the right work within PLCs. In researching this topic, my hope was
that I would be able to develop a deeper understanding of what constitutes the right work within PLCs; ascertain practical structures and best practices that support lesson study; and to examine various views on lesson study to generate options for program implementation.

**Review of Literature Related to Change**

**Lesson study.**

In researching what constitutes a lesson study, it appears that my understanding of lesson study, which is to *plan* a lesson, *teach* the lesson, *analyze* the lesson and *apply* the lessons learned are consistent with my research findings. However, there were a few subtle differences in how researchers define lesson study. Lewis (2009) defines lesson study as,

> “cycles of instructional improvement in which teachers work together to: formulate goals for student learning and long term development; collaboratively plan a research lesson designed to bring to life these goals; conduct the lesson in the classroom, with one team member teaching and the others gathering the evidence during the lesson, using it to improve the lesson; and if desired observe the lesson being taught in a different classroom” (p. 95).

The model defined by Lewis (2009) is different from the iPD Lesson Study model that I experienced prior to SES. In my experience, the lesson was collaboratively planned, taught individually and then the teacher documented success, failure and lesson adaptions based on their perception. The teachers’ findings were later shared with the group during PLC time to analyze student results and make revisions for future lessons.

Miles & Frank (2008) mentions a lesson study design that is credited for improving student achievement, and this design is consistent with the model that I have practiced in
previous years. The key difference in the two lesson study models presented above is the observation and reflection piece. In the Lewis (2009) model, the teachers get the added benefit of asking questions that pertain to specific classroom occurrences by directly observing. Fink, Markholt, Copeland, & Michelson (2011) say that classroom observations should produce data about teaching and learning that can be used in a way to produce productive feedback. Additionally, the teacher delivering the lesson benefits from the feedback of her peers and is able to consider other perspectives than her own. In the Miles & Frank (2008) model, the teacher is limited to his or her own perspective and the feedback from her peers based on her own observations.

Guiterez (2015) goes on to state that reflection is critical to instructional development because it allows teachers to reconstruct their knowledge within a relevant context. I believe that both concepts can be effective, but the model presented by Lewis (2009), will allow the teachers observing the lesson to ask additional questions that may not have been discussed in the PLC using the other model, thereby deepening the reflection and increasing the potential to impact practice. According to Lewis, Fischman, Riggs, & Wasserman (2013), modifying lesson study structures such as videotaping in lieu of live observations, skips the use of others who may be knowledgeable, which is one of the greatest benefits of the process. Due to the benefits offered by directly observing a lesion, it may be beneficial for SES to consider implementing live observations to maximize the benefits of lesson study within PLCS.

Benefits.

Foster (2004) says that lesson study addresses the “twin goals of improving student achievement and enhancing teacher quality simultaneously” (p. 406). This notion
happens to be the reason why the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation birthed the Innovative Professional Development program. The foundation does not require districts to use lesson study as a means to meet the program goals. That discretion rests with individual districts. However, MDRC (2016) makes a great point when it states that if quality professional development only occurs at the district level and connections are not made at the school level, than the translation will never materialize into real strategies or real assignments for students thus no great benefits for them. Robinson & Leikin (2011) suggest that one of the benefits to lesson study is that it provides a focused opportunity for teachers to examine how students learn in a manner that allows the teacher to continuously develop professionally.

According to Miles & Frank (2008), a well-designed professional development combines the professional development activities and approaches most likely to improve student performance in a school’s specific context. Both of these features are provided in professional learning communities. However, collaboration for the sake of collaborating is not intrinsically valuable (Bambrik-Santoyo, 2010). There has to be clearly defined goals for collaboration to be impactful. Wagner, Kegan, Lahey, Lemons, Garnier, Heising, Howell, and Rasmussen (2006) credits lesson study as the ideal example of teacher collaboration that is designed to improve practice. Wagner et al. (2006) model is similar to that of Lewis (2009), adding a special focus on refining the lesson until they are collectively satisfied, and then the targeted practice is widely shared with other teachers. This lesson study process filters the frivolous information and allows the group to share the practice that maximize teacher growth and learning.
Culture and lesson study.

In addition, to change the structure of the lesson study process by strengthening its practices, it is important for school leaders to recognize that other changes must occur. Kanold (2011) argue the work that leaders do daily will be what transforms the culture, therefore it must be intentional and disciplined. Therefore, it is important that the daily work is the right. Reeves (2009) states that policy changes without cultural changes is pointless and leads to frustration. School cultures that focus on high stakes testing can be counterproductive to the benefits that are offered through the lesson study process (Howell & Saye, 2016). Teachers become consumed with how they can get their students to pass an exam instead of how thinking about how they can change their practices to enhance learning for students. Therefore, schools must be cognizant of the culture they are creating in an effort to produce productive school communities.

Cultural changes begin with the attitudes, behaviors and beliefs of groups. I know this concept to be true, because as a teacher participating in the initial role out of the iPD program through lesson study, I quickly realized that I had a choice: a choice to treat the change as a check off system, or I could invest in the process and reap the benefits, and I chose the latter. I was able to improve my practice and positively influence those in my group. At that point, I was able to experience the research findings of Chong & Kong (2012), which states that lesson study creates a greater connectedness among peers and a better alignment of task to learning goals. Cajkler, Wood, Norton, & Pedder (2013) understands that lesson study has the ability to bridge gaps between theory and practice, which has become increasingly more important as teachers are preparing students to meet the demands of 21st Century. I believe this happens organically as teachers try to meet
their common instructional goals and encounter similar problems of practice through sustained collaboration, reflection and revision.

**Teachers as reflective learners**

Another element that seemed to directly impact the quality of the lesson study cycle was the amount of time teachers spent reflecting on their individual practice. Marzano, Frontier & Livingston (2011) says that the first thing that any teacher seeking to improve their pedagogical skills must do is to identify specific areas of strength and weaknesses. This thinking supports the study from Hiebert, Morris & Glass (2005) which argues that professional development should be built on a program that intentionally commits to preparing teachers to learn. This model treats lessons as experiments because it implies that an educator’s experience does not guarantee improved performance in and of itself, but rather a planned lesson, evaluation of the lesson, and revisions are better indicators for improved performance (Hiebert et al, 2005). This model creates that idea that teachers need to learn to teach. Therefore, if you create the expectation that part of professional development is to learn how to teach a concept well, then it becomes part of a culture that is embedded and will likely produce results for teachers and students.

**Definition of Terms**

According to Patton (2008), “language matters, jargon creates barrier, but clear language facilitates access to evaluative thinking” (p. 53). To prevent the former, I have identified terms that are germane to this particular field of study in hopes of supporting clear communication.
iPD - this is an acronym for Innovative Professional Development. It refers to a form of professional development by which teachers obtain more frequent professional development that meet their needs (MDRC, 2016).

Lesson Study - a process by which a group of teachers meet to thoroughly plan every detail of a lesson together. The lesson is taught as planned by each teacher. Then the teachers meet to revise the lesson based on what they learned using the lesson the first time. The groups are part of an ongoing process (Miles & Frank, 2008).

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) - is a learning environment by which teachers collaborate for a specific goal that is tied to a desired outcome (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I did not find it necessary to fully incorporate the traditional lesson study cycle as defined by Lewis (2009) at SES. The model in which I participated, where we incorporated plan, teach, act and do seems to be sufficient for engaging PLCs in the right work. These steps seem to be consistent with DuFour et al. (2016) three big ideas, which are to focus on learning, a collaborative culture and collective responsibility, and a results orientation. Given the amount of change that will need to occur, I believe that DuFour et al. (2016) frame will be a good place to begin, as it is conceptually simple. As we engage in a plan to change the work within PLCs we will continuously monitor, and if we believe that we are ready to incorporate observations to advance the work, we will make those adjustments at that time. At the advice of Kanold (2011), I will chunk the plan so that I am deliberate and intentional in leading school improvement efforts.
Envisioning the Success TO-BE

In the previous chapter, I used the data analysis to paint the current reality of SES using the 4C’s “as is” chart (see Appendix J). In this section, I will attempt to detail the features of the organization that must be realized in order for SES to systemically engage in effective PLCs that will continuously meet the professional development needs of our teachers and lead more students to demonstrating mastery on state assessments. This vision has been captured using the 4C’s “to be” chart (see Appendix K), and by providing details with regard to the four arenas of change (competency, conditions, culture, and context).

Contexts.

The ideal context for SES bare some similarities to the “as is” state of SES. The context will remain the same with regard to its demographic make-up. The school will remain a demographically diverse population consisting of a 68% minority rate and 91% free and reduced lunch status, making it a Title I school. However, the greatest difference will be evident in student achievement. SES will no longer be under DA status with a “D” rating. SES will be an “A” school that will serve as a model for other schools, with similar challenges, throughout the state. SES will be an “A” school because of the immense capacity and leadership exercised by teachers, coaches, and administrators. Seventy percent or more of students will demonstrate proficiency on state assessments in response to heightened culture of learning. Teachers, coaches and administrators deliberately engage in PLCs because they understand how it contributes to their individual and collective professional development needs, as well as, improve the quality of student learning.
Conditions.

The ideal conditions of SES would be one where PLCs are highly revered, understood and carried out with fidelity. There will be a clear structure, that consists of a 45 minute time period three time a week where teachers, coaches and administrators come together to actively create the optimal conditions for teaching and learning. Teachers are at the forefront of this work and understand their role. Teacher leadership is prevalent, celebrated, and is used outside of PLCs to advance the organization by eliminating instructional deficits and pushing mediocrity to exceptionalism. PLC members readily provide and receive criticism, which is used constructively to develop competence. Coaches offer coaching and resources as needed. Administrators are consistently present, and the quality of PLCs are consistent throughout the school. Individual and collective professional development is actively pursued.

Culture.

SES’s culture will be best described as learning-centered because we recognize the value of being a community of learners. The culture is driven by our actions and need to ensure that all student learn. We understand that teacher quality significantly affects student learning so we view PLCs as an opportunity to continuously develop the quality of instruction for students. Miles & Frank (2008) says that one teacher is incapable of producing the kind of sustained learning by students that will defy the odds. Therefore, at SES we will maximize the benefit of collaboration. PLC members dive deeper by analyzing student work, problem solving, and designing intentional instructional practices to meet the needs of our students. PLCs are driven by student need in conjunction with the district’s scope and sequence rather than rely solely on the scope
and sequence. The time used to engage in this work is held sacred, and is not interrupted by other functions of the school. There is a mutual respect among all members because we recognize that we all have something to contribute.

**Competencies.**

Competencies at SES are ones that embody diversity. We will have a staff that varies in experience level and use that to our advantage. Even with the varied experience, all teachers and coaches will possess teaching and learning expertise. The administrative team has the ability to identify learning needs and help learners acquire the necessary competencies with regard to content and pedagogy. Coaches provide modeling, side-by-side coaching, and observations with targeted feedback. School leaders understand that learning is an ongoing process and models the expectation to continuously improve and develop. School leaders also seek external supports when the internal supports are insufficient in meeting a learning need of students or teachers. The school has made the shift from private practice to public practice. Teachers frequently observe teaching and learning by others with a particular focus for development. Classroom walkthrough data is used to guide the professional development focus and to calibrate learning among all members of the school. Finally, individual and collective professional development is deliberate and highly supported.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, change is a difficult process that requires a commitment from everyone in the organization. Change first begins with the school leaders, their actions and their ability to influence others. Even with Wagner et al. (2006) 4 C’s framework, school leaders must be able to relate the parts to the whole effectively. Competencies,
conditions, culture, and context are the parts to the change plan. As part of systems thinking, we must address all the parts of the system, and it should be done collaboratively. I now see the 4 C’s as a way to ask all the necessary questions to analyze the different aspects of SES that will ultimately influence change. In assessing the state of our school, I believe that culture will be the most difficult to change. It’s often the last indicator for change, but the greatest evidence of change. SES is ready to move toward a culture of collaboration that will foster teacher development and student performance.

CHAPTER SIX: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Introduction

According to the data, the three main areas that need to be addressed within PLCs are the things that are not working well, the challenges, and the supports needed for members to engage effectively in the process. PLCs in the current state are ineffective in building competence among teachers and improving learning for students and as a school, the teaching and learning of students is our main reason for existing. Therefore, we must address these three main areas because they are serving as barriers to this goal. The data revealed that while collaboration, sharing of ideas, a shared focus and a set meeting time are working well, there are other things that are not working well or present themselves as challenges. Some of these things include diving deeper through data analysis, managing conflict, and protecting the time provided. Furthermore, PLCs lack the support of a clear purpose, roles and expectations. Using Wagner’s change model (2006), in this section I will detail the strategies and actions (see Appendix L) that are necessary to bridge the “as is” (see Appendix J) state to the “to be” (see Appendix K)
vision. This will help provide a frame to support the acquisition of the desired context, conditions, competence and culture at SES.

Strategies and Actions

In an effort to bring about organizational change within the specific context of SES, I believe there are four required strategies. The strategies are as follows: (1) Develop a Common Language and Plan, (2) Implement the Plan, (3) Provide Support, and (4) Monitor and Adjust. Each of these strategies require intentional action steps. Therefore, I have detailed the components that need to be addressed based on what the data presented. Please see Appendix L for a comprehensive strategies and action chart.

The first strategy in implementing the organizational change is to develop a common language among faculty and staff. This will create the kind of clarity within an organization where people can connect actions to purpose (DuFour et al., 2016). This strategy can be accomplished in three action steps. The first action step is to complete a needs assessment with the leadership team. This will include building shared knowledge about the qualities of an effective PLC. The team will then need to evaluate the existing structures and behavior to determine what will change and what will stay the same (Reeves, 2008). This process will help everyone make informed decisions. The second action is to determine a focus and establish a goal grounded in why. Kotter (2012) says that establishing a common goal is critical to team work because it positions the team to achieve the agreed upon objectives. The third action step is to communicate the goals consistently and repeatedly. When all members of the learning community have access to the same information, the likelihood of them reaching the common goal increases
substantially (DuFour et al., 2016). It is also beneficial to revisit the goals frequently because it aids teams in keeping the work within PLCs consistent with the mission.

The second strategy, to develop and implement a plan, requires SES to make good use of its resources. New goals require new instructional strategies to accompany the new way of thinking, specifically on how to reallocate resources to attain the goals (Miles & Frank, 2008). Two actions steps will support this strategy. The first action is to provide a research-based framework to ensure that teams engage in the right work by properly structuring the PLCs. Bambrick-Santoyo (2010) recognize that when teams put their faith in PLCs that are not properly structured, it leads to an improper use of resources. With the sense of urgency faced by SES, we cannot afford misappropriate valuable resources such as time and people. The second action step is to define roles and expectations so that everyone is clear about how the work they engage in advances the plan. Defining roles and expectations will also commit individuals to the collective plan. Leaders who want to bring about change need to understand that individuals are behind change and their behaviors must change to bring about organizational change (Reeves, 2009). Therefore, it is clear, change the behavior of individuals, and change the organization.

The third strategy, to provide support, is critically important. Wagner et al. (2006) says that a lack of support undercuts the change effort. This strategy requires three action steps. The first action step is to align structures, resources, and school structures with the plan. This action steps validates the work. Those engaged in the work are more likely to believe in the work if they see leadership is willing to commit the right resources to the effort (Miles & Frank, 2008). At SES, we want a heightened sense of commitment to guide the work because we believe that it can positively impart change. The second
action step is for everyone involved to be present in the process and commit to continuous professional development, as an individual and collective. DuFour et al. (2016) says we must focus on what we can change, ourselves, and this will have an overall impact on the organization. In other words, everyone must be accountable for his or her growth. The third action step is to exercise two-way communication. Educational leaders must maintain two-way communication to accomplish school and system goals (FDOE, 2011). Open communication allows school leaders to be well informed and to communicate that they value the input of others. This skill is necessary to foster respect and trust. I believe that these are skills conducive to a productive learning community.

The fourth and final strategy, monitor and adjust, is key to operating strategically as an organization. Fullan (2008) says that constantly monitoring and making adjustments is critical the success of any organization. The first action step is for school teams to assess progress of the goal, develop a plan collectively based on student, teacher and classroom walkthrough data. Bambrick-Santoyo (2010) recognize this process as a practical approach to academic excellence because it enables schools to make informed decisions. The second action step requires school leaders to provide feedback along the way. Fink et al (2011) highlights the importance of feedback to school improvement by stating that the quality of feedback is directly related to the depth of educational form. Providing feedback is a practice that requires practitioners to become more reflective, a practice that could help sustain forward movement.

**Conclusion**

In sum, school leaders can understand their current reality and visualize where they want to go, but if they fail to develop a plan that contains clear strategies and
actions, the organizational goal will not be attained. The strategies above are based on the current reality of SES and what research suggest as best practices for creating effective professional learning communities within schools. I have faith that if these strategies and actions are implemented in the manner they are recommended, SES will create a sustainable structure within in PLCs that will produce quality professional development for teachers and greater learning outcomes for students.

**CHAPTER SEVEN: IMPLICATIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Introduction**

In the previous section, I detailed how specific strategies and actions are needed to move SES from the “as is” state to the “to be” visionary state. In this section, I will identify a policy that is counterproductive to the organizational change plan and propose a change to the policy that will support an environment that is conducive to creating effective professional learning communities at SES. The premise of the policy is built on a key finding from the data analysis, which revealed a need to protect PLC time. All participant groups indicated a need for time, particularly protected time to collaborate. Collaboration encumbers a variety of things, but when sufficient time is not provided to complete those things, the important work cannot get done. To be clear, that work is building capacity among professionals and increasing the amount of knowledge acquired by students.

Research suggest that teachers need time to engage effectively in the PLC process, a minimum of 90 minutes a week (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). At SES, this is two forty-five minute planning periods per week. Another study discussed in Miles & Frank
found that in order for instruction to improve, teachers needed to collaborate at least three hours every week. The current policies within our district are not consistent with this research. In Sunshine County the teachers ‘contract negotiated by the union place limits on common planning. In fact, the current language of the teachers’ contract (citation omitted to preserve anonymity, 2018) read as follows:

Section 2. Planning Period: Teachers will have the equivalent of four planning periods per week without school required group meetings such as collaborative planning, PLCs, professional development (this includes scheduled and required meetings by literacy coaches etc.) or the obligation to provide emergency sub coverage for other teachers’ classes.

The following types of meetings are exempt and teachers are required to attend: IEP, parent conferences, MTSS, 504, etc.

Collaborative planning, other group meetings, and provisions of sub coverage may be scheduled as follows:

A. One planning period per week may be scheduled with a required meeting or emergency sub coverage following the guidelines outlined in Article X, section 7.
B. If a second planning period is required in a week, teachers will be given an equivalent amount of time for individual planning on early release Wednesday.
C. If a third planning period in a week is required, teachers must be paid for a planning period outside of work hours. When teachers are provided an additional paid planning period, it must be completed on the school site within one week or pay is forfeited…

This policy clearly values teacher autonomy over collaboration. While teacher autonomy has its place, it is not within professional learning communities. Miles & Frank (2008) states that teacher quality is best developed collaboratively. If that time is significantly reduce in relation to the amount of time spent teaching, it is difficult to imagine how teacher quality under these conditions can positively impact student learning. Perhaps this is why the PLCs at SES have not been able to demonstrate this kind of impact.
Policy Statement

I would like to recommend a policy change that will allow schools to engage teachers in a minimum of 135 minutes per week, three out of five days for common planning, PLCs or professional development for a minimum of 45 minutes each day. This policy change will increase the amount of time schools can allocate to collaboration.

DuFour et al. (2016) contends that it is misleading for school leaders to state the importance of collaboration and fail to provide the needed time within the school day because doing so communicates that collaboration is supplementary rather than a vital part of teaching. Fink et al. (2011) add to this thinking by acknowledging that school reform is an impossible endeavor if we continue to provide structures that allow teachers to remain in silos and privatize their practice.

My argument is simply one of proportions. Taking into consideration the amount of time, approximately 1,725 minutes per week, teachers spend delivering instruction and creating learning experience for varied learners as compared to 45 minutes per week of collaboration to address these complex needs, somehow seems insufficient. While I am not totally convinced that three planning periods (135 minutes a week) is the panacea, I am however suggesting that providing this protected time, makes it much more likely for teachers to engage in the necessary practices that will produce the most optimal learning conditions for all students, each day. Collaboration has to encompass the time, a duration of 45 to 60 minutes three to five times per week, the practice of collaborating and accountability in order to be effective (Reeves, 2009).

I envision this policy as being effective in meeting the problem because it is creating a space that increases the likelihood of teachers being able to truly collaborate. It
makes the endeavor, at least possible. Miles & Frank (2008) outlines collaborative time as, “a time for teachers to plan lessons jointly, to receive expert support in content areas, to model effective instructional practices, to reflect together on instructional practices, and to receive feedback from peers or subject experts” (Location 541). Even if you focused on one of these practices, a team would be hard pressed to complete the tasks within the allotted time. Begging the question, at which point will they get to the other important work?

Analysis of Needs

In this section, I will provide an analysis of six distinct disciplinary areas to include educational, economic, social, political, legal, moral and ethical. Through this analysis, I am hoping to provide a comprehensive assessment of the possible policy implications, in the event the policy change is approved or considered. This analysis is not limited to negative or positive implications, it is an attempt to aid Sunshine school and district leaders into making an informed decision.

Educational analysis.

If the proposed policy change was adopted, it could have vast implications for school improvement efforts at SES. Odden (2012) recognized the value of time, and is conveyed when he says that teacher collaboration during the school day is necessary to improve core instruction because it is the foundation for all learning. Thus, it is clear to me that if we do not provide sufficient time for teachers to collaborate during the school day, improvement efforts will not show up in student learning and the collaborative work performed under limited time will be in vain. I believe this is especially true for schools
like SES, where more than 50% of students are not demonstrating the ability to master grade level content.

Teachers are already presented with the challenge of closing the achievement gap for these students, so when we request that they attend planning once a week for 45 minutes and they are not reaping tangible benefits, they see attending PLCs as one more challenge. Therefore, when another opportunity that is less challenging presents itself, teachers are more inclined to taking it and schools are tasked with filling another vacancy. Moreover, (Reeves, 2009) argues that only deep implemental change lead to student achievement. If the policy is not conducive to supporting deep implementation and student achievement, we need to reevaluate the policy.

Finally, PLCs are also about the professional development of the teacher. Fullan (2008) says that deepest learning for students or teachers occurs when people learn through the work. The less time we are given teachers to learn through the work, the less they are building their competence and instructional capacity. Reeves (2009) understands that when schools attempt to do more work with the same amount of time, they lose to fatigue. It is time that schools and districts provide adequate support, in the form of time, to teachers so that they stand a chance at accomplishing the things they set out to do.

**Economic analysis.**

In analyzing the economic implications of this policy change there seems to be no negative economic impact on the district, school, or stakeholders unless this becomes a point of disagreement with the union contract. A disagreement with a union contract could result in legal fees and/or retribution. In and of itself, this policy change does not produce additional cost. Rather it appears to be a better allocation of resources. Miles &
Frank (2008) states that investing in collaboration is a way to leverage some of a school’s most valuable resources such as time and money. However, if the policy does not change and schools try to increase collaborative time under the existing contract, schools will incur an economic cost that they may or may not be able to sustain.

**Social analysis.**

As the policy stands, there is so much variance throughout the district regarding the amount of time spent on collaborative planning. Some schools require the minimum per the contract language, while other schools who have additional resources are able to compensate their staff. This variance creates equity gaps within the district. Essentially, the district is stating it values collaborative time, but is not providing support to do that work well. Fullan (2008) calls this disconnect between statement and action, rhetoric. This practice is highly misleading.

The amount of time devoted to collaboration also affects the quality of collaboration. If the policy change is implemented, SES could potentially have higher retention rates do to teachers engaging in high performing professional learning communities. High performing PLCs can lead to higher job satisfaction (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). This is a challenge that SES currently faces, consequently, increasing time to build high performing PLC could lead to more sustainable school improvement effort.

**Political analysis.**

This policy change could have serious implications for the district. While SES may see the value in the policy change, those sentiments may not be supported across the district. Additionally, different levels such as elementary, middle and high, face different challenges when it comes to PLCs. Unions can have considerable discretion regarding
this topic, and often times their focus is to protect the rights of teachers (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). Differing opinions can cause tension and division within the district, resulting in a distraction from the important work and reason behind the proposed change. The policy change will need to be presented correctly, and that is in a way that emphasize the benefit to the student while communicating respect for the teacher.

**Legal analysis.**

The only foreseeable legal implication is when schools and districts fail to honor the contract that has been established. Once teachers begin to engage in the work under the proposed policy, schools will need to take extra precautions to ensure that they are implementing school policies and structures that are consistent with the contract language. Ideally, schools need to communicate that they value educators time by giving time back when possible. Effective school leaders readjust time to meet the various needs of its school (Miles & Frank, 2008). If a school fail to do this, a teacher could file a grievance, which could result in legal action. If a school allows the work to get to this point, it can be damaging in more than one way. It could also undermine the quality of work within PLCs by taking the focus away from the work.

**Moral and ethical analysis.**

Duignan (2012) says, “The time is now opportune for educational leaders to review and embed high ethical and moral standards in their policies and practices” (Location 278). The moral and ethical implications does just that. This policy change says that we are making a diligent effort to ensure that the needs of students are first. We are saying we are committing the time so that our students may be better. Furthermore, this policy acknowledges the various needs of students and provide flexibility within
school teams to adjust times to meet those needs. The largest moral and ethical
implication is that we would be demonstrating our values by acting on what we believe
and aligning the resources to support the work.

**Implications for Staff and Community Relationships**

If school leaders engage staff in the conversation about what the policy change
will look like on our campus, the policy implications for staff relationships could be
transformative for the school. Daresh & Lynch (2011) contend that staff should be
included in the design of policies that directly affect them, as it leads to follow through
and buy in. In my experience, the more teachers are able to work together to achieve
some degree of success, trust will inevitably be built. Wagner et al. (2006) recognize trust
as essential to building the foundation for teaching. When school teams have established
trust, the possibilities are endless.

Effective leaders actively listen to and learn from community members to
accomplish school and system goals (FDOE, 2011). If school leaders get in front of the
policy change and communicate effectively with the community. The school could
generate partnerships that will help support the school in communicating appreciation
and value for what the educators do. This could be evidenced by community members
extending their resources to schools during teacher appreciate events, being especially
careful to communicate why.

The policy implications for parents is an advantageous one. Parents want to
ensure that their child is learning in the best environment. Providing additional time to
teachers can equate to just that, because this would mean that rather than having access to
one teacher, their child has extended their access to other teachers by receiving lessons
that were designed with an intentional focus using a collective brain. The collective brain refers to a group of educators, with varying experiences, skills, and strategies. If schools communicate the value of this resource to parents and produced corresponding results. This could strengthen the school to home partnership because parents will reinforce the values with their children in a variety of ways that will lead to a more supportive learning environment for students and strong partnerships.

Conclusion

In conclusion, school leaders are required to cultivate a learning environment that creates the best possible learning conditions students (FDOE, 2011). Understanding quality instruction as the single greatest influence of student learning, we have a duty to make sure we align school resources and create structures that support quality instruction (Miles & Frank, 2008). Providing educators with the time necessary to engage in the right work is critical in creating those conditions. When we as a collective begin to make choices that truly put students first, students will inevitably succeed.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

Introduction

My personal experiences at SES with PLCs created the theme for this program evaluation. My first year at SES, I realized that we had a culture of meeting, but not collaborating. PLCs were led by coaches and with minimal input from teachers. I soon realized that teachers were not building their instructional capacity and that I was unable to positively connect their work in PLCs to student achievement. This realization raised a series of questions, the largest question being, are our PLCs effective? What is working well? What is not working well? What are the greatest challenges? What would teachers,
coaches and administrators propose as solutions to these challenges? What supports can we provide to ensure that we engage effectively within PLCs? Together, these events and questions in conjunction with my quintessential experience with PLCs in another school setting gave birth to this program evaluation project.

Discussion

The purpose of the program evaluation was to determine the effectiveness of the current PLCs at SES. Effectiveness was to be determined in comparison to research but also by looking at whether or not PLCs led to building capacity by increasing teacher competence and student achievement. I addressed these goals by administering surveys and interviews to teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators. I also compared these data to student achievement data. Based on the findings, I was able to determine that the PLCs at SES were ineffective in meeting its goal. The most compelling evidence was in the student achievement data. For three consecutive years, SES was able to maintain a “C” for its school grade, which for all intent and purposes is average. However, in the most recent school year, 2017-18, SES earned a “D” as a school grade; two points shy of an “F”. The school grade is a direct reflection of the declining percentage of students who were able to demonstrate proficiency or learning gains on the state assessments.

The survey and interview data further revealed that as a school, we were not engaged in the right work within PLCs. Therefore, this findings framed our next steps, which is to engage in the right work. To ensure that we engage in the right, a review of the literature was conducted and used to develop strategies and actions. Broadly speaking, SES will begin by developing a common vision. We will then develop and
implement the plan. Finally, we will provide support, monitor, and adjust the plan as needed. So that we may sufficiently support the plan, each of the strategies are undergirded with research-based action steps.

Even in being methodical with the strategies and actions, I realized that we still would not be able to engage in the right work, work that will lead to the professional development of teachers and increased student achievement, without sufficient time. Thus, I have proposed a policy that would increase the amount of planning time from one forty-five minute planning period per week to three forty-five minute planning periods per week. The research by Reeves (2009), DuFour & Fullan (2013), and Miles & Frank (2008) are clear in that members of a learning community will never be able to bring about reform without first having the time to do the work. I am confident in the suggestions proposed in this study. If SES can incorporate the strategies and actions herein with fidelity, backed by the support of a policy that increases one of our most valuable resources, time, we will be on our way to building a community of learners that continuously evolve as professionals and is validated by student achievement.

**Leadership Lessons**

Throughout this program evaluation, I have experienced a number of leadership lessons because through this process the revelations and research have provoked a constant state of reflection. Perhaps the greatest leadership lesson is recognizing that as leaders we are responsible for the quality of instruction provided to students and that we have considerable influence in this area. The research by Fink et al. (2011) really changed the way I view expertise, as well as how I value this quality. My understanding of expertise has evolved to include teaching expertise and learning expertise. Fink et al.
(2011) states that the system-wide development of this kind of expertise is extremely complex and requires leaders to be deliberate and skilled when attempting to cultivate any level of expertise school-wide. I further understand that it “takes expertise to build expertise,” although this alone does not equate to instant improvement (Fink et. al, 2011, p. 15). The implications for leaders in leading school change is sophisticated. Leaders must possess expertise in a variety of disciplines and must be able to use it at the right time and space. Expertise is critical to the development of the people behind the work, thus the work, and students.

Moving forward as a school leader, I have used these leadership lessons to reflect on my current level of expertise, so that I am deliberate in trying to acquire the skills necessary to help move our school forward. I do understand that the acquisition of knowledge is a process, and that there will not be a single moment in time where I suddenly have all the skills and knowledge needed to solve SES’s complex issues. I am however striving to build my competence in a way that is hugely influential. I am striving to possess the kind of leadership that breads a culture of collaboration, reflection, improvement, public practice, best practices, and ultimately change. When I speak of change, I am precisely speaking to a positive increase in teacher and student capacity. Therefore, as I continue to acquire expertise, I will use it in a manner that will advance this mission.

Most recently, I have gained a greater depth of knowledge regarding best practices in PLCs by attending a state conference that included presenters such as Timothy Kanold, Michel Fullan, Hargreaves, and Rebecca DuFour. It was impactful because they confirmed and built on the learnings from this study. After the conference, I
returned to SES and met with the leadership team to discuss key takeaways. I presented key findings from this study and engaged in a problems solving session regarding next steps. As of the 2018-19 school year, we have begun this work and collectively we are already beginning to make shifts within PLCs that has helped us to become focused on learning, collaborative and results oriented.

**Conclusion**

PLCs are based on the premise that the quality of schools are only as good as the people within in them. Therefore, we must invest in the people and remain intentional about their development because we have an obligation to the students we serve. The most exciting part of all, is knowing that PLCs can be a vehicle for which this can be achieved, knowing that a viable solution exist gives charge to the work. To accomplish this, we, the school community, must remain intentional in our focus and align the resources to the right work. Leaders must rise to the standard of the profession and mobilize the greater school community around this work while communicating a sense of urgency. In considering the entirety of this study, Odden (2012), in my opinion, captures the essence of it all. Odden (2012) states, that in order to reduce the variation in teacher effectiveness, which is the practice of making teacher practice more constant across classrooms, we must identify the core features of effective instruction. PLCs are the core feature of effective instruction, so let us commit to the charge!
REFERENCES


National Louis University. (2016). IRRB Criteria for Ethical Research. Retrieved June 19, 2016 from [https://d2l.nl.edu/d2l/le/content/66604/viewContent/1982293/View](https://d2l.nl.edu/d2l/le/content/66604/viewContent/1982293/View)


Appendix A: INFORMED CONSENT
School Site Administrator: Consent to Conduct Research at School Site

My name is Tiffany Scott, and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University, Tampa, Florida. I am asking for your consent for selected staff at your school to voluntarily participate in my dissertation project. The study is entitled: “A Program Evaluation of Professional Learning Communities to Improve Professional Development and Student Learning.” The purpose of the study is to develop a deeper understanding of what constitutes an effective Professional Learning Community; ascertain practical structures and best practices that will support this model; and to examine various views on PLCs to generate options for future program implementation.

My project will address the process of Professional Learning Communities and how it impacts those involved at your school. I will use the data I collect to understand the process and changes that may possibly need to occur regarding PLCs at your school. I will observe, survey, and interview up to 60 teachers, up to 4 instructional coaches, up to 4 administrators at your school in this area.

I will give teachers who volunteer a printed survey to be completed and returned using specific instructions as included, and an Informed Consent form indicating that they understand the purpose of the survey and agree to take the survey. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Also, participating teachers, coaches, and administrators may volunteer for one 30-minute interview by selecting the box at the end of the survey form. I will conduct one 30-minute interview with those participants who have completed an Informed Consent form indicating that they understand the purpose of the interview and agree to be interviewed. I will audio tape the interviews and transcribe the tapes. I will also gather qualitative data on up to 60 teachers, up to 4 instructional coaches and up to 4 administrators by observing the PLC using the PLC Rubric (Appendix H). The PLC observation will occur during common planning time, as to not interfere with instructional time. I will observe each PLC session for a minimum of 6 times over a 1-hour period. I would like to begin this observation cycle in February, 2018 and continue until the end of the 2017 – 2018 school year. All information collected in the surveys, interviews and observations reflect their experience and opinion as a participant in the PLC process.

By signing below, you are giving your consent for me to ask for voluntary participation from selected stakeholders to participate in this research study: to complete a survey, to participate in 1 interview, and to be observed in up to 10 times within your Professional Learning Community.

All participation is voluntary and you may discontinue your participation at any time. I will keep the identity of the school and all participants confidential, as it will not be attached to the data and I will use pseudonyms for all participants. Only I will have access to all surveys, interview tapes and transcripts, and field notes, which I will keep in a locked cabinet at my home or on a password protected hard drive for up to 5 years after the completion of this study, at which time I will shred all data. Participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk beyond that of everyday life. While you are likely to not have any direct benefit from being in this research study, your taking part in this study may contribute to our better understanding Professional Learning Communities and the implementation process at your school and district and what changes, if any, need to be made.

While the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, your identity will in no way be revealed. You may request a copy of this completed study by contacting me at tscott13@my.nl.edu.

In the event you have questions or require additional information, you may contact me by email at tscott13@my.nl.edu. If you have any concerns of questions before or during participation that you feel I have not addressed, you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Carol A. Burg, email: cburg@nl.edu; or EDL Program Chair Dr. Stuart Carrier, scarrier@nl.edu; 1.847.947.5017; or the NLU’s Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth, NLU IRRB Chair, shaunti.knauth@nl.edu, 224.233.2328, National Louis University IRRB Board, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603.
Thank you for your participation.

Principal Name (Please Print)

Principal Signature __________________________ Date

Tiffany Scott

Researcher Name (Please Print)

Researcher Signature __________________________ Date
Appendix B
Teacher Survey Questions

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, as it is completely voluntary. The information obtained from this survey will remain anonymous and confidential. It will be used solely for my dissertation research and making improvements to the PLC process. Feel free to answer or not answer any question, according to your personal preference.

1. How many years have you taught?
   a. 0 – 3 years
   b. 4 -10 years
   c. 11 -15 years
   d. 16 + years

2. How long have you participated in the PLC process?
   a. I do not participate in the PLC process
   b. 1st year
   c. 2-5 years
   d. 6 – 10 years
   e. 11+ years

3. What are two things that are working well in your PLC?

4. What are two things that are not working well in your PLC?

5. What is the biggest challenge with implementing the PLC process?

6. What do you believe is the best way to improve the PLC process?
Please read the statements below and select the response that best represent your thoughts. Select one response per question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENTS</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. As a result of the PLC process, I have improved my instructional practices.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. As a result of the PLC process, I collaborate more with my peers in meaningful ways.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. As a result of the PLC process, I continuously learn from the instructional practices of my peers through collaboration.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. As a result of the PLC process, I have increased competence in my content area.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. My team uses the time allotted during PLCs to plan assessments/tasks, analyze student work, and/or plan to adjust future instruction based on an analysis of student work.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. My team and I implement the PLC process with fidelity.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. My team and I have adequate support in meeting our PLC goals.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I consider myself a leader within my PLC.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. My students benefit from me participating in a PLC.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Overall, the PLC process is very beneficial.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I understand my role within the PLC.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. The quality of my PLC has a huge impact on how I view myself as a member of the larger school community.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

☐ Yes, I am willing to participate in a 30-minute voluntary interview and up to 5 email exchanges to clarify any information. I will send an email to tscott13@my.nl.edu with INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT in the subject line.

Additional Comments:
Appendix C
Instructional Coach Survey Questions

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, as it is completely voluntary. The information obtained from this survey will remain anonymous and confidential. It will be used solely for my dissertation research and making improvements to the PLC process. Feel free to answer or not answer any question, according to your personal preference.

1. How many years have you been in education?
   a. 0 – 3 years
   b. 4 - 10 years
   c. 11 -15 years
   d. 16 + years

2. How long have you participated in the PLC process?
   a. I do not participate in the PLC process
   b. 1st year
   c. 2- 5 years
   d. 6 – 10 years
   e. 11+ years

3. What are two things that are working well in your PLC?

4. What are two things that are not working well in your PLC?

5. What is the biggest challenge with implementing the PLC process?

6. What do you believe is the best way to improve the PLC process?
Please read the statements below and select the response that best represent your thoughts. Select one response per question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (SA)</th>
<th>Agree (A)</th>
<th>Neutral (N)</th>
<th>Disagree (D)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. The goals and expectations for my participation in the PLC process has been clearly articulated.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I am consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The teachers are consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The teachers consistently contribute to the PLC.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The hard work is evenly shared among all members of the PLC.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The PLC process is beneficial for teachers and students.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. My team uses the time allotted during PLCs to plan assessments/tasks, analyze student work, and/or plan to adjust future instruction based on an analysis of student work.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. In my PLC, we frequently learn from each other’s practice.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Teachers frequently take on leadership roles within the PLC.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Teachers plan the majority of their instruction and tasks.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

☐ Yes, I am willing to participate in a 30-minute voluntary interview and up to 5 email exchanges to clarify any information. I will send an email to tscott13@my.nl.edu with INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT in the subject line.

Additional Comments:
Appendix D
Administrative Survey Questions

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, as it is completely voluntary. The information obtained from this survey will remain anonymous and confidential. It will be used solely for my dissertation research and making improvements to the PLC process. Feel free to answer or not answer any question, according to your personal preference.

1. How many years have you been in education?
   a. 0 – 3 years
   b. 4 - 10 years
   c. 11 -15 years
   d. 16 + years

2. How long have you participated in the PLC process?
   a. I do not participate in the PLC process
   b. 1st year
   c. 2– 5 years
   d. 6 – 10 years
   e. 11+ years

3. What are two things that are working well in your PLC?

4. What are two things that are not working well in your PLC?

5. What is the biggest challenge with implementing the PLC process?

6. What do you believe is the best way to improve the PLC process?
Please read the statements below and select the response that best represent your thoughts. Select one response per question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree (SA)</td>
<td>Agree (A)</td>
<td>Neutral (N)</td>
<td>Disagree (D)</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree (SD)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENTS</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. The goals and expectations for my participation in the PLC process has been clearly communicated.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. In the PLC, my job is to function as a learning member.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Teachers and coaches appreciate when I contribute to the PLC discussion/problem solving.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I am consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The teachers are consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Coaches are consistently and adequately prepared for PLCs.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The hard work is evenly shared among all members of the PLC.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The PLC process is beneficial for teachers and students.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Teachers consistently contribute to the PLC.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. In my PLC, we frequently learn from each other’s practice.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Teachers frequently take a leadership role within the PLC.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Teachers plan the majority of their instruction and tasks.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

☐ Yes, I am willing to participate in a 30-minute voluntary interview and up to 5 email exchanges to clarify any information. I will send an email to tscott13@my.nl.edu with INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT in the subject line.

Additional Comments:
Appendix E: INFORMED CONSENT
Adult Participant Survey

My name is Tiffany Scott, and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University, Tampa, Florida. I am asking for your consent for selected staff at your school to voluntarily participate in my dissertation project. The study is entitled: "A Program Evaluation of Professional Learning Communities to Improve Professional Development and Student Learning." The purpose of the study is to develop a deeper understanding of what constitutes an effective Professional Learning Community (PLC); ascertain practical structures and best practices that will support this model; and to examine various views on PLCs to generate options for future program implementation.

My project will address the process of Professional Learning Communities and how it impacts those involved at your school. I will use the data I collect to understand the process and changes that may possibly need to occur regarding PLCs at your school.

You may participate in this study by signing this consent form indicating that you understand the purpose of the study and agree to participate in a printed survey that I will give to you, to be completed and returned using specific instructions I will include at the end of the survey. It should take approximately 15 minutes for you to complete the survey. All information collected in the survey reflects your experience and opinion as a participant in PLC process.

Your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue your participation at any time with no negative consequences. I will keep the identity of you, the school, the district, and all participants confidential, as it will not be attached to the data and I will use pseudonyms for all participants in the report. Only I will have access to all of the survey data, which I will keep in a locked cabinet at my home or on a password protected hard drive for up to 5 years after the completion of this study, at which time I will shred all survey data. Participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk beyond that of everyday life. While you are likely to not have any direct benefit from being in this research study, your taking part in this study may contribute to our better understanding of Professional Learning Communities and the implementation process at your school and district and what changes, if any, need to be made.

While the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, your identity will in no way be revealed. You may request a copy of this completed study by contacting me at tscott13@my.nl.edu.

In the event you have questions or require additional information, you may contact me by email at tscott13@my.nl.edu. If you have any concerns of questions before or during participation that you feel I have not addressed, you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Carol A. Burg, email: cburg@nl.edu; or EDL Program Chair Dr. Stuart Carrier, scarrier@nl.edu; 1.847.947.5017; or the NLU’s Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth, NLU IRRB Chair, shaunti.knauth@nl.edu, 224.233.2328, National Louis University IRRB Board, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603.

Thank you for your participation.

Participant Name (Please Print)

Participant Signature _______________________________ Date _______________________________

Tiffany Scott

Researcher Name (Please Print)

Researcher Signature _______________________________ Date _______________________________

162
Appendix F
Teacher Interview Protocol

This will be a face-to-face interview that will last no more than 30 minutes in duration. The interview will take place during non-school hours. All names will be held in confidence and only I, the researcher, will hold a copy of the verbatim interview. We will use a pseudonym during the interview, to protect your anonymity on the tape and the transcript. I will use both a tape recorder and paper/pencil for note taking. Feel free to answer or not answer any question, according to your personal preference.

1. What worked well with the Professional Learning Community (PLC)?

2. What did not work well with the PLC?

3. What are the greatest challenges within the PLC?

4. What ideas do you have to address these challenges?

5. What do you believe is the purpose and goal of a PLC?


7. What supports do you need to engage effectively in the PLC process at your school?
Appendix G
Instructional Coach Interview Protocol

This will be a face to face interview that will last no more than 30 minutes in duration. The interview will take place during non-school hours. All names will be held in confidence and only I, the researcher, will hold a copy of the verbatim interview. We will use a pseudonym during the interview, to protect your anonymity on the tape and the transcript. I will use both a tape recorder and paper/pencil for note taking. Feel free to answer or not answer any question, according to your personal preference.

1. What worked well with the Professional Learning Community (PLC) process?

2. What did not work well with the PLC process?

3. What are the greatest challenges within the PLC?

4. What ideas do you have to address those challenges?

5. What do you believe is the purpose and goal of a PLC?


7. What supports do you need to engage effectively in the PLC process at your school?
Appendix H
Administrative Interview Protocol

This will be a face to face interview that will last no more than 30 minutes in duration. The interview will take place during non-school hours. All names will be held in confidence and only I, the researcher, will hold a copy of the verbatim interview. We will use a pseudonym during the interview, to protect anonymity. I will use both a tape recorder and paper/pencil for note taking. Feel free to answer or not answer any question, according to your personal preference.

1. What worked well with the Professional Learning Community (PLC) process?

2. What did not work well with the PLC process?

3. What are the greatest challenges within the PLC?

4. What ideas do you have to address those challenges?

5. What do you believe is the purpose and goal of a PLC?


7. What supports do you need to engage effectively in the PLC process at your school?
Appendix I: INFORMED CONSENT
Adult Participant Interview

My name is Tiffany Scott, and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University, Tampa, Florida. I am asking for your consent for selected staff at your school to voluntarily participate in my dissertation project. The study is entitled: “A Program Evaluation of Professional Learning Communities to Improve Professional Development and Student Learning.” The purpose of the study is to develop a deeper understanding of what constitutes an effective Professional Learning Community (PLC); ascertain practical structures and best practices that will support this model; and to examine various views on PLCs to generate options for future program implementation.

My project will address the process of Professional Learning Communities and how it impacts those involved at your school. I will use the data I collect to understand the process and changes that may possibly need to occur regarding PLCs at your school. I will observe, survey, and interview up to 60 teachers, up to 4 instructional coaches, and up to 4 administrators at your school in this area.

You may participate in this study by signing this consent form indicating that you understand the purpose of the interviews and agree to participate in one 30-minute interview, with possibly up to 5 email exchanges in order clarify any questions I may have regarding your interview data. All information collected in the interviews reflects your experience and opinion as a participant in the PLC process.

All participation is voluntary and you may discontinue your participation at any time with no negative consequences. I will keep the identity of the school and all participants confidential, as it will not be attached to the data and I will use pseudonyms for all participants. Only I will have access to all interview tapes and transcripts, which I will keep in a locked cabinet at my home or on a password protected hard drive for up to 5 years after the completion of this study, at which time I will shred all data. I will conduct one 30-minute interview with those participants who have completed an Informed Consent form indicating that they understand the purpose of the interview and agree to be interviewed. I will audio tape the interviews and transcribe the tapes.

All information collected in the interviews reflects your experience and opinion as a participant in the PLC process. Participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk beyond that of everyday life. While you are likely to not have any direct benefit from being in this research study, your taking part in this study may contribute to our better understanding of Professional Learning Communities and the implementation process at your school and district and what changes, if any, need to be made.

While the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, your identity will in no way be revealed. You may request a copy of this completed study by contacting me at tscott13@my.nl.edu.

In the event you have questions or require additional information, you may contact me by email at tscott13@my.nl.edu. If you have any concerns of questions before or during participation that you feel I have not addressed, you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Carol A. Burg, email: cburg@nl.edu; or EDL Program Chair Dr. Stuart Carrier, scarrier@nl.edu; 1.847.947.5017; or the NLU’s Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth, NLU IRRB Chair, shaunti.knauth@nl.edu, 224.233.2328, National Louis University IRRB Board, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603.

Thank you for your participation.
Appendix J

As-Is Chart

Baseline AS IS 4 C’s Analysis for SES Current PLCs

Context
- SES need to increase the number of students who demonstrate proficiency and learning gains on the Florida Standards Assessment.
- Teacher leadership is not evident in planning or around teaching and learning.
- Title I (91% F/R Lunch, 68% Minority) and DA School (D Status)

Culture
- Teachers collaborate with one another and coaches, but provide little input.
- Meetings (MTSS, PC, ESE, etc.) take precedence over PLC.
- Teachers and coaches allow pacing to drive planning instead of student needs.

Conditions
- 1 required PLC 1 x per week (45 minutes)
- Expectations vary per grade level (roles, agenda, etc.).
- PLCs led by instructional coaches.
- Minimal leadership opportunities for teachers within PLCs.
- Instructional coaches provide teachers with lessons/tasks.

Competencies
- Teachers are unaware of their lack of ownership and reflection with regard to teaching and learning.
- Coaches are continuously developing their skills.
- Teacher growth in practice is not evident systematically.
- Varied experience levels and retention is inconsistent.
- Administration has not established clear goals, expectations or supports around PLCs.

The problems is that the current PLC model does not have a structure that supports effective PLC practices that lead to professional development for teachers and improved student outcomes.
Appendix K
To-Be Chart

Vision TO BE 4 C’s Analysis for SES Future PLCs

Context
- At least 70% of students are making learning gains and demonstrating proficiency according to the FSA.
- Ensuring quality learning experiences for every child every day.
- Teachers increase their leadership roles within PLC and on campus in effort to build capacity.
- Title I (91% F/R Lunch, 68% Minority) and no longer a DA School (A Status)

Culture
- Teachers collectively provide the majority of the input.
- Meetings (MTSS, PC, ESE, etc.) are designated days and PLC time is held sacred.
- Teachers consistently dive deeper within the content to provide quality task and quality instruction.
- Student needs drive the direction of planning in conjunction with the scope and sequence.

Conditions
- 2 required PLC 2 x per week (45 minutes)
- Consistent expectations per grade level (roles, agenda, understanding, etc.).
- Coaches co-facilitate PLCs.
- Ample leadership opportunities are provided within PLC.
- Teacher leadership is celebrated.
- Instructional coaches provide teachers with lessons/tasks as a support when needed.

Competencies
- Teachers consistently engage in a cycle of reflection as they continuously build competence.
- Teacher growth in practice is evident systemically.
- Varied experience levels and retention is consistent.
- All members of the learning community continuously develop their skills and apply to school context.
- Administration communicates clear goals, Expectations or supports around PLCs.

The achievement vision is to build a collaborative culture through PLCs where teachers continuously grow, improve their instruction and take ownership in their learning in a manner that leads to greater student achievement.

169
## Appendix L

Strategies and Actions Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Develop a Common Language**   | 1. Complete a needs assessment with the leadership team.  
                                 | 2. Collectively commit to a focus and set a goal grounded in *why*.  
                                 | 3. Communicate the goal consistently and repeatedly to all.                                                                 |
| **Develop and Implement a Plan**| 1. Provide a research based framework that focus on the right work.  
                                 | 2. Define roles and expectations to commit individuals to the work.                                                                 |
| **Provide Support**             | 1. Align resources, structures and school systems with the plan.  
                                 | 2. Attend planning regularly and engage as an active participant.  
                                 | 3. Exercise two-way communication.                                                                                                                                 |
| **Monitor and Adjust**          | 1. Assess progress of the goal and develop a plan collectively to make adjustments based on data.  
                                 | 2. Provide ongoing feedback to teachers and coaches.                                                                                                                                 |