

**TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF AFTERSCHOOL COLLABORATION: AN
EVALUATION OF COLLABORATIVE DESIGN**

by

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Abstract

This research sought to understand teachers' experiences with a voluntary collaborative design called Afterschool Collaboration (ASC) for the purposes of evaluating the design and making recommendations for future ASCs. There are many designs for collaboration, each with similar strengths and weaknesses regarding their ability to facilitate learning that translates into changed beliefs and classroom practices. To gather rich data and capture the essence of teachers' perspectives on their experiences with ASC, phenomenological interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2017) were conducted with six participants at the same school. The findings revealed many tensions between structure and purpose, leaving most participants questioning the value of participating in ASC. Missing from the participants' perceptions of ASC was leadership: Leadership to shepherd people towards a shared vision, and to nurture and sustain a sense of community. The data suggest that future ASC might benefit from an investment in teacher-leadership.

Keywords: teacher collaboration, teacher-leadership, professional development, professional learning

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Dedication

I wish to dedicate this to my participants; without whose voices, there would be no story to tell.

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Acronyms

- | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------|
| i. ASC | Afterschool Collaboration |
| ii. BCTF | British Columbia Teachers Federation |
| iii. GLM | Generative Leadership Model |
| iv. PLC | Professional Learning Community |

Introduction

After four years of teaching on-call and temporary contracts, I got my dream job teaching grade one at a school close to my home. I became comfortable in my role and was ready for a new challenge. I loved learning, and I considered myself to be a deep thinker and problem solver. I typically tried to reason everything out carefully and enjoyed finding the most efficient ways to do things. I found sitting in unproductive meetings and collaborative groups where people were not passionate about learning and discussions were not solutions-focussed to be highly frustrating. I also really wanted to be a part of a team and, up until recently, had not had the opportunity.

I tended to gravitate towards leadership roles but did not like being the “boss” as I had no desire to go into administration. I took on a few leadership roles in the school with limited success; I volunteered to organize and maintain outdoor classroom resources, and I once coordinated our Afterschool Collaboration (ASC). In both these ventures, the outcomes fell short of my expectations. I wanted to encourage and inspire more teachers to try outdoor teaching, but I did not have the confidence to ask teachers to give me their time to explain and demonstrate the uses for outdoor classroom resources. Instead, I created a table that listed the items, possible curricular connections, and appropriate grade levels. The result was that the teachers who were already doing outdoor learning could easily access the resources, but only one teacher tried something new.

My hope for the ASC that I led was to foster a school community and create a school-wide team, but it did not happen. I started seeking graduate degrees for further challenge and growth, primarily in environmental education or place-based learning, but nothing quite clicked.

I realized that my passion turned towards teacher empowerment and team/culture building, but I had no experience or skills in this area.

Context

I taught in one of the few growing school districts in the province. It had 20 elementary schools (kindergarten to grade 5), 5 middle schools (grades 6 to 8), and 3 secondary schools (grades 9-12). It also offered alternate programs, including one alternate school, a continuing education program, and a distance learning school. Approximately 1,800 teachers and support staff served more than 14,000 full and part-time students.

Afterschool Collaboration

ASC was unique to the district being examined, and its' structure was similar to the Professional Learning Community (PLC) structure. The primary purpose was to allow school teams to meet collaboratively to build their expertise and share their knowledge. Sessions were to be jointly planned and designed by a school-based professional development team.

All teaching and support staff in our district had the opportunity to attend. Participation in ASC was voluntary, but staff members were strongly encouraged to do so. A day off in-lieu was granted to all people who participated in the 5-6 hours of collaboration. In previous years, two days off were given in-lieu of 10-12 hours of collaboration, and at the time of writing, there was no indication whether it would stay 5-6 hours in future years or revert to 10-12 hours. The sessions took place on set Wednesdays after school for 2-2.5 hours. Staff who chose not to participate in ASC were required to come into their work site and engage in self-directed professional development on their in-lieu day(s).

Each staff member could determine the frame of their ASC professional development, and they had two options: in-school or intra-district discrete group. The expectation was that in-

school sessions would be jointly planned and designed by a school-based professional development team at each school site. Intra-district discrete groups followed all the same guidelines but were not restricted to a school site. Instead, it was made up of staff members from various schools and positions across the district. Intra-district discrete ASC groups had to have at least four members, one of whom was trained as a facilitator.

I had participated in ASC at three different schools. In my first two schools, most of the staff were involved, and the sessions were very administrator-driven. The sessions were organized, and the goals were clear. In my third school, there was no structure and no planning committee. It made me uncomfortable, and I was unsure what I was supposed to do with that time.

This third school site, where this study was conducted, had approximately 385 students and 21 teachers, including non-enrolling teachers. The staff was almost half veteran teachers with more than 15 years of teaching and half new teachers with less than 5 years of experience. I fit somewhere in the middle as I had been teaching for 10 years. There was a lot of resentment amongst experienced staff around changing working conditions, prolonged and ineffective bargaining, increased testing and data-collection demands from the district, and rapid changes to technology. We had several outspokenly vocal teachers who shared the same concerns at every meeting. The prevailing attitude of the veteran teachers was that they could not change the system, so they insulated themselves and kept doing what they had always done. This culture was at odds with my problem-solving disposition. The tendency to insulate worked against my desire to have effective teams.

My Inquiry

I had been at my current school for two years when I attempted to create change by becoming more involved in ASC. I talked with union reps, administrators, and teachers from various schools to understand the history and evolution of ASC in the district. The information I gathered can be summed up with the following key points.

First, there was an issue of leadership. When ASC was first introduced in the district, principals created the vision and ran the sessions. I participated in several of these administrator-led ASC sessions as a temporary employee without understanding the purpose or expectations of the model. There were some that I felt were good because the leaders incorporated team-building elements, and meetings were organized with tangible tasks for participants to complete. Others felt to me more like a sit-and-get style professional development rather than collaboration, with topics that I could not readily connect to my practice. Eventually, the union got involved and insisted that teachers had to have autonomy over their professional development. ASC was considered professional development and not staff development; therefore, principals were no longer allowed to direct learning or lead.

Consequently, we had no leader at my school, no collective vision, and friction between teachers who disagreed over how we should spend the time. Some teachers wanted to plan and prep units independently, some wanted to work on report cards, and some wanted to collaborate but were unsure how. Second, I learned that our school was not unique in this challenge and that many schools were struggling to meet the requirements and reach the goal of ASC. Finally, I heard that if we could not solve these problems and use our ASC effectively, we might lose the structure and the time in-lieu.

At that time, I decided to put my effort into improving the ASC at my school. I asked the Professional Development Chairperson to call for a Professional Development Committee

meeting for anyone interested in planning that year's ASC. Together we came up with a plan for the first ASC meeting and presented it to our colleagues. The result was teachers were still doing their own thing but meeting at the beginning and end of each session to share their plans and report their progress. I was frustrated and knew that I did not have the skills and knowledge to make changes in how the staff at my school participated in ASC. I also felt angry and judgmental towards teachers I thought were taking advantage of the time to complete their 'own work' instead of using it for professional development. I began to share in the hopelessness and apathy that I had observed in veteran teachers.

Several questions had arisen for me. What was holding teachers back from ASC? Could we have a successful ASC even if only part of the team was involved? Was the required effort to make changes to ASC at our school even worthwhile? I had also really begun to focus on teachers' wellness and ask questions like, what does ASC do for teachers' well-being? How can ASC help and support teachers and relieve some of the stress and pressure of the job rather than becoming an additional burden?

My inquiry had a purpose: to understand and improve ASC at my school. To do this, I asked the question: What are teachers' experiences and perceptions of ASC, and what are their perceptions on how to improve it? The significance of this research was that it had the potential to influence positive change to ASC at this school and similar schools in the district.

To determine how to design future ASCs at my school, I needed to understand the perceptions of my colleagues toward their experiences with ASC and what types of ASC they thought would best meet their needs. I would compare my data to the literature around models of teacher collaboration and levels of engagement. In the next section, I discuss what the literature says about teacher collaboration.

Literature Review

Much literature exists to suggest that collaboration plays a role in the work of teachers. Adams et al. (2009) reference collaboration as the key to generative learning communities, defining it as the ability to generate critical questions of practice to gain a deeper understanding of pedagogy. At the same time, many studies of collaboration in action demonstrate that collaborative activities often fall short of this goal. Noonan (2019) suggests that there is no one-size-fits-all design for professional development because what is effective may depend on individual teachers' beliefs and experiences.

What is Teacher Collaboration?

Teacher collaboration can be described as two or more teachers working together to improve educational processes and outcomes (Tichenor, 2019). It can be further defined as a shared creation (Adams et al., 2019; Horn & Little, 2010). Hargreaves (2019) describes collaboration as professional development embedded in schools and districts, or co-labouring through joint work and, throughout the literature, collaboration is linked to teacher development, learning, and growth (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Hargreaves, 1998; Hord, 2009; Howard, 2019).

Collaboration occurs on a continuum of levels of engagement from passive to active, top-down to teacher-directed (Hargreaves & O'Connor 2018), and members can be offered multiple levels of engagement (Wenger et al., 2014). An important part of my research would be to determine where my colleagues were on this continuum, listen carefully to where they might want to go next, and what kinds of support may be necessary to get them there.

Components of Teacher Collaboration

The literature discusses six features that are necessary for successful teacher collaboration. First is a shared vision or goals (Adams et al., 2019; Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Hord, 2009; Howard, 2019). According to Senge's (1994) work on learning organizations, shared vision is linked to values and constitutes a team's goal and purpose which drives individuals to keep working and learning together. Second is learning (Adams et al., 2019; Hord, 2009; Howard, 2019; Nias et al., 2005) and joint work (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). Adams et al. (2019) differentiate professional learning from professional development. Professional development is often episodic, individual, and off-site, but professional learning is cyclical, collaborative, and context-based. Joint work could take the form of collaborative inquiry (Hargreaves, 1998, 2019), planning, practical tasks, organizing and undertaking events or performances (Nias et al., 2005); or design, evaluation, and preparation of teaching materials (Schneider & Kipp, 2015). Third, a community of caring and trust needs to be built before teachers will be comfortable enough to share details about their practice, their students' work, and their individual challenges (Adams et al., 2019; Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Curry, 2008; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Hord, 2009; Howard, 2019; Kuh, 2016).

The fourth component, time, is essential because of the hectic schedules of teachers and their reluctance to use their preparation times for tasks outside of meeting the immediate needs of their teaching responsibilities (Hargreaves, 1998, 2019; Hord, 2009; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). Fifth, professional dialogue (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Hord, 2009) can range from superficial to generative. Shallow dialogue includes sharing ideas about lessons or information about specific students (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019), whereas generative dialogue encourages teachers to examine their current practices (Adams et al., 2019). Schneider and Kipp (2015) suggest that teachers should engage in regular and concrete discussions that include observations

and critiques of their teaching. Generative learning conversations, which will be detailed later, emphasize reflective dialogue (Adams et al., 2019). Finally, teacher collaboration involves some form of leadership or organization. Leadership could be provided by administration (Adams et al., 2019; Datnow, 2011; Kuh, 2016), a head teacher (Nias et al., 2005), an informal teacher-leader (Danielson, 2006), or it could be shared (Hord, 2009).

The organization might follow a specific model of collaboration such as Generative Learning Conversations (Adams et al., 2019), Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) (Hargreaves, 2019; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Hord, 2009, Curry, 2008), or Generative Leadership Models (Adams et al., 2019). It may also be structured around the use of protocols (Horn & Little, 2010; Lasky et al., 2009). ASC, which is unique to the district being studied, appears to be envisioned as a PLC. These communities can provide scaffolding that supports teacher collaboration (Lasky et al., 2009), helps to hold members accountable (Adams et al., 2019), and teaches them how to use their time together productively. To explore this further, I examine different types of collaboration in the next section.

Types of Collaboration

Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) point out that for almost 30 years, most teacher professional development has been collaborative in some way, but that it has undergone an evolution through four succeeding stages (emergence, doubt, design, transformation). These stages could be ranked from least effective to most effective. Emergence occurs when there is a correlation between collaboration and student achievement. It offers an alternative to isolation, but it is underdeveloped. Doubt describes a stage when collaboration is mainly top-down, and the emphasis is on talk rather than action. In the design stage, many models for collaboration are created and implemented. The final stage is transformation, where collaboration models become

embedded into all areas of the teaching practice rather than as add-on meetings. Since ASC was meant to fall in the design stage, it is helpful to compare it with other existing designs. I will outline some of these possible designs in the following sections.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

Shirley Hord was the first person to use the term PLC, and hers are probably the most widely used models of collaboration (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). PLCs include the following: *professionals* (those tasked with delivering instruction), *learning* (engaging to gain knowledge and skills), and *community* (a group with a shared vision, shared and supportive leadership, supportive relations, respect, caring and trust, collective learning, and peer sharing) (Hord, 2009).

Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) describe the evolution of PLCs as having gone through three generations. In the first generation, PLCs were communities of learners focused on a common goal, who used dialogue and evidence to learn together to increase student achievement. The second generation became more top-down, with administrators pushing initiatives to increase short-term student achievement, such as scores on standardized tests (Hargreaves, 2019; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). The third generation has shifted back to a teacher-led collaborative inquiry model that concentrates on the whole child and critically examines teaching practices (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018).

Generative Learning Conversations

Generative learning conversations are structured, facilitated, and reflective discussions that can lead to new learning and a deeper understanding of practice (Adams et al., 2019). The use of protocols can guide them. While protocols have been linked to increases in the learning

potential of collaboration (Horn & Little, 2010), research suggests that skilled facilitation is necessary for them to work well (Little & Curry, 2009).

Lasky et al. (2009) studied learning conversations in action, focusing on learning to use data. The results of their study indicate some trends and challenges of putting generative learning conversations into practice. First, it took training and skill for the leaders to implement generative learning conversations and then, even with that training, they often failed to ask focused questions that would prompt deeper learning. The second was that teachers focused chiefly on procedures and expectations of meetings rather than on reflection of their practice. When they did talk about their practice, they tended to talk about *what* they do and *how* they do it, rather than attempting to make meaning or explore alternatives. This study highlights a potential gap in supports that foster generative conversations, which can lead to evidence-based teaching and organizational improvements. Missing from this study are teacher's perceptions of the collaborative experience and its impact on their teaching practice and individual well-being. There are different kinds of generative learning conversations.

The Generative Leadership Model (GLM). (Adams et al., 2019). The Generative Leadership Model uses generative learning conversations as its primary tool and involves collaboration between multiple levels of the educational organization. This model is supported by a climate of trust and meaningful investment of time best embedded in the work day. Teachers and leaders both make growth plans linked to the school's shared vision, which focuses on optimizing student learning. Components include using data to inform practice and building a sense of shared responsibility. Principals model the generative process, provide regular classroom observations and focused feedback to teachers, and provide time and space throughout the work day for reflective conversations with and between teachers and Central Office

Leadership Teams. The entire structure is supported and held accountable to the teams who train site principals to facilitate generative learning conversations and visit school sites monthly.

Afterschool Collaboration (ASC)

Afterschool collaboration is unique to the district being examined, and its design was described in detail in the introduction. The ASC design appears to be modelled on PLCs. Those tasked with delivering instruction engage with one another to gain knowledge and skills through peer sharing in a supportive community with a shared vision (Hord, 2009). The district website offered suggestions on building teamwork, including viewing students as the collective responsibility of the whole staff, setting norms, and creating a respectful team (citation omitted to preserve anonymity).

ASC was designated as professional development and was, therefore, subject to the British Columbia Teachers Federation's (BCTF) criteria for professional development. Professional development activities must be voluntary and not impede the autonomy of colleagues; they must improve the individual or collective work of teachers and meet obligations to colleagues, collective agreements, and our profession (BCTF, 2021).

Having looked at different designs of teacher collaboration, I turn my attention to the effect of school culture on collaboration.

Culture

The literature suggests that teachers value working with and learning from colleagues (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Hargreaves, 2019; Nias et al., 2005; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). Hargreaves (1998) reports that in collaborative cultures, interaction with colleagues is often spontaneous, voluntary, development-oriented, pervasive across time and space, and unpredictable. This describes what I call informal collaboration; teachers engaging in

collaboration outside of structured ASC times. Collaborative culture can unify a school, but it can also divide it.

Whole School vs. Balkanization

While collaboration designs might be applied to a whole school to improve student outcomes, Nias et al. (2005) reported that the *sense* of a whole school environment as experienced and expressed by school staff might be distinct from an entire staff participating in collaboration. In cases where staff felt the sense of a whole school:

They were conscious that acting together and accepting interdependence were constraints which they had to accept if they wished to become participating members of educational communities and that these ‘whole schools’ when they existed would, in turn, enhance and support their work as individuals. (p. 106)

Nias et al. (2005) suggest that developing a sense of whole-school collaboration is a gradual process that occurs over time and depends on both leadership and staff cooperation. Their findings indicate that it would not likely be possible to create a sense of whole-school in high schools, which tend to be divided by departments. Still, it may be possible in smaller elementary schools where there is a strong sense of community, shared educational beliefs practiced in classrooms, staff regularly working together, and members relating well to one another. They also felt that while whole school practices involve shared beliefs and knowledge of the practices of colleagues, autonomy within the classroom is still essential.

In contrast to whole-school, Hargreaves (1998) describes Balkanization as a pattern of working relationships where staff is divided into small sub-groups. In these situations, there is very little collaboration across groups, limiting the capacity to empathize with other groups and creating a politicized environment where there are winners and losers (Hargreaves, 1998). This

concept is similar to what Senge (1994) calls “skunk works,” small groups that quietly pursue new ideas, which can result in ‘polarized camps’ that no longer support one another (p. 215). The following section provides an overview of some of the challenges of teacher collaboration.

Challenges

Teachers may perceive that structured collaboration helps them focus on their practice (Kuh, 2016), but research suggests that the learning may be shallow rather than being deeply reflective in a way that challenges pedagogies and practices (Hargreaves, 1998, 2019; Horn & Little, 2010; Howard, 2019; Lasky et al., 2009; Little & Curry, 2009; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). Howard’s (2019) work suggests that individual teachers may fall in different places on a continuum of learning that ranges from superficial to deep. Hargreaves’ (2019) work suggests that most collaboration is restricted to storytelling or sharing ideas and practices. Lasky et al. (2009) report that teachers often focus on the protocol in learning conversations rather than searching for meaning. Teachers can say what they do in their classrooms, but rarely could they say how or why they do those things (Lasky et al., 2009).

Lasky et al. (2009) also shared that teachers tended to want to ‘get to work’ rather than build relationships. The types of work completed during collaboration times include sharing resources, lesson planning, preparing teaching materials (Schneider & Kipp, 2015), and sharing information about specific students (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). This work involves exchanging ideas, resources, and materials but rarely includes shared creation, which Hargreaves (1998) describes as joint work.

A desire to get to work may lead some teachers to avoid collaboration altogether. In Hargreaves’ (1998) study, teachers perceived that they wasted time during collaboration, so they quickly talked about what they each wanted to work on and then went their separate ways. The

principal in this study was frustrated when she saw the teachers working alone and felt like they were abusing the time. Datnow's (2011) research echoed the notion of teachers not knowing what to do with their time.

There are many barriers to teacher collaboration. In her pan-Canadian study on teacher professional development, Campbell (2017) reported that 80% of teachers said their best professional learning was collaborating with colleagues and identified three significant barriers to teacher collaboration: increased workload, inconvenient timing, and finances. Some attempts to schedule for collaboration during the work day have failed because teachers actively protect their preparation time for completing the tasks associated with the day-to-day pressures of their work and are reluctant to use it for collaborating. Teachers do not always find regularly scheduled meetings useful (Hargreaves, 1998). Instead, they would prefer the flexibility to meet when they need to (Hargreaves, 1998).

Critics question collaboration's effect on teacher learning. While Meirink et al. (2007) and Havnes (2009) agree with existing research that demonstrates that learning communities may positively affect professional development, they suggest that teacher learning does not lead to changes in classroom practices. In his work, Havnes (2009) reports that, "though teams had an impact on the school culture among teachers and the teachers expressed appreciation for the team structure, there were no clear connections between teams and their student achievements" (p. 156). Shoenfeld (2004) writes that, "it is a lot easier to adopt the rhetoric of reform than to adopt the practices of reform" (p. 246).

Collaboration can lead to contrived collegiality, which is a group that relies on false agreements (Adams et al., 2019; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018) or worse, the perpetuation of bias and unproductive patterns (Curry, 2008). For actual growth and change to occur, there

should be dissenting voices and critical feedback (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). The features of contrived collegiality include regulation by administration, implementation-oriented, fixed in time and space, and compulsory. Adams et al. (2019) believe that participation in collaboration must be voluntary, and Hargreaves (2019) notes that forced collaboration is not only ineffective for increasing student learning, but it often results in decreased informal collaboration between teachers. Nias et al. (2005) extend this even further and suggest that, “if they force collaboration on a recalcitrant staff or upon individuals with irreconcilable beliefs and values, they may open up divisions which will destroy even the semblance of unity” (p. 147).

The literature suggests strategies to overcome some of these challenges. These are outlined in the next section.

Addressing the Limitations of Collaboration

The tendency for collaboration to be shallow and task-focused can be seen as a limitation (Hargreaves, 1998, 2019; Horn & Little, 2010; Howard, 2019; Lasky et al., 2009; Little & Curry, 2009; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). It may be the result of teachers perceiving threats to their independence (Hargreaves, 1998), insufficient structural supports (Horn & Little, 2010), or a lack of trust (Datnow, 2011). There is the possibility that each of these limitations could be overcome through the persistent application of the six components of successful collaboration, keeping in mind that building a learning community is hard (Schoenfeld, 2004) and takes time (Nias et al., 2005).

The literature demonstrates that there are essential components to collaboration and offers various designs that incorporate all of these; however, it also suggests that collaboration is not always successful even with suitable structures. My study will evaluate the effectiveness of ASC at my school and make recommendations for improvements.

Methodology

I identify as a problem solver. I believe that if you can see the whole picture and understand multiple perspectives, then you can begin to find solutions. That is not to say that one solution will work in every context; it must fit the time, place, and people who are involved. People are complex and come to any situation with their own set of experiences that will inform their preferences; people change over time and from one context to the next. What worked five years ago, or at another school, may not work now or here. These differences result in multiple realities, locating my ontological perspective in the constructivist paradigm (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 2002). In the case of ASC, I believed that the solutions could be found by gaining a rich understanding of the experiences and perceptions of my participants. The knowledge that I gleaned from this research would come directly from the responses of my participants; therefore, my epistemological stance was that knowledge is subjective and that I could gather findings by spending time in the field, working closely with my colleagues. I acknowledged that I have my own set of biases and assumptions (see sections on bracketing). Therefore, my axiological stance was that knowledge could be value-laden.

My informal investigations to date made me question the effectiveness of ASC at my local school. My literature review revealed that teacher collaboration might benefit teachers and students and I felt compelled to do what I could to improve upon the current model. My purpose was to find a way to increase the benefit of ASC for the teachers at my school. Before making recommendations for change, I needed to know the current situation for teachers at my local school and what changes they would like to see. Since this inquiry addressed the perceptions of participants, it could most effectively be answered using qualitative methodology.

Based on my personal experience and my review of the academic literature, my research question was: What perceptions do established (at least two years teaching at the school) teachers at my local school who have participated in ASC have, and what are their recommendations for future ASC?

Method

My research sought to understand teachers' perceptions of the phenomenon of ASC. The method of phenomenology was well-suited to capture and describe the lived experiences of a select number of teachers from my school and their perceptions of how ASC could be improved (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Phenomenology emerged from the work of Husserl (1913/1982) and Heidegger (1927/2008) in Germany in the 1930s, flourished until the 1960s, and then was “forgotten for a while” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 5). Husserl believed that the external world was reduced to the contents of personal consciousness and that immediate experience was the best way to understand phenomena (Groenewald, 2004). Phenomenology also presupposes that experiences cannot be divided into subject/object (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). It seeks to find the meaning of participants' experiences. More recent phenomenology follows a set of procedures. After choosing a phenomenon to study, the researcher distinguishes the broad assumptions of phenomenology and brackets themselves by presenting their own experiences and biases. After data collection, usually interviews, significant statements in the form of quotes from the transcripts are organized in the step known as horizontalization. Next, clusters of meaning are grouped and organized into themes. Textural and structural descriptions are created to present what and how the participants experienced the phenomenon, and finally, the essence is reported and presented in written form (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Creswell and Poth (2017) suggest that

the structure of phenomenology makes it suitable for novice researchers. A challenge of the method is that the essences of any experience are never totally exhausted and that the analysis is specific to a particular population and context (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). Finally, even with bracketing, it is never possible for the researcher to remove their own bias altogether (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004; Creswell & Poth, 2017).

In keeping with the philosophical tenets of phenomenology, my research sought to find the commonalities between experiences of ASC (Creswell & Poth, 2017). After analysis, I hoped to piece together the story that described the essence of what my colleagues had experienced, how they experienced it, and discover what, if any, recommendations they had for the future.

Bracketing

Because I come to this research with my own set of assumptions and my own experiences with ASC, I use this section to clarify my own experiences, to bracket myself, and observe the phenomenon with fresh eyes (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Bracketing may not eliminate my own bias when interpreting the data. Still, it allows the reader of my final report to determine where and how my own experiences have influenced my interpretation. Bracketing is an essential step in a phenomenological study (Creswell & Poth 2017).

The emphasis throughout my study was on teacher needs and teacher learning. I based my entire project on the assumption that ASC that benefits teachers would also benefit students. My evaluation of ASC was based on teachers' perceptions, not on a correlation to student achievement. I included some of my perceptions of my experiences of ASC, but these were not included in the analysis.

I can recall participation in six different ASC groups. The administrative team directed two, and the rest were teacher-directed. The first of the administration-directed ASCs was a

positive experience. It involved active participation by the teachers to co-create a plan to roll out “Leader in Me” as a school-wide behaviour program. It was fun and valuable to me. The second was a book study on RTI (Response to Intervention), an American system for deciding which students should get extra support. I found the book boring. Because of significant cultural and administrative differences between Canadian and American school education, I felt that we should not model our educational practices on an American program. The sessions were mainly lecture style, where we learned how to fill out a series of new forms, creating a paper trail that would replace walking down the hall to talk to a colleague or the principal.

Of the “teacher-led” ASCs, I describe a negative one and a positive one. I put teacher-led in quotes above because my negative example was not planned or led at all. I had come to a new school where the culture was that everyone did their own thing. Administration had been directed not to interfere with ASC, so they did not offer any guidance or support. It involved a lot of sitting around and, from my perspective, people not knowing what to do and going back to our classrooms to do preparation alone. I hardly remember it, except that it felt like a cop-out. I felt guilty, like we were doing it all wrong, but I was unsure of what we should be doing instead.

By the time my positive experience occurred, I had been involved in ASC planning for a couple of years and tried to get things working. We still did not work as a whole school, but I was with a great group of teachers, grades K-2 (I teach grade 1), who were committed to implementing guided math in our classrooms that year. We worked together to find lessons and plan the structure of our rotations. Each month when we met back at ASC, we discussed what had gone well, what needed adjustments, and then problem-solved together. We discussed student engagement and student learning. We discussed our fears about “what the other kids were doing,” a notion that all the kids who were not directly working with the teacher may be off

task and not learning anything. During that year, the global pandemic of COVID-19 struck, which forced schools to operate virtually. Our last ASC session was virtual, and we worked real-time on a shared document creating a table of math mini-lessons that could be taught effectively online or be assigned as homework. Sharing the workload during this very stressful time was crucial and reduced my stress. This ASC inspired and supported me, and I grew in my practice as a math teacher.

The other ASCs that I had participated in shared features with the other examples, but some highlights of what I liked were sessions where I was engaged as an active participant. ASCs that I did not like often had little planning, or dominant participants/leaders talked the whole time.

When I started my studies in my MEd, it became apparent that teacher collaboration was relevant for many reasons, and I wondered why so many ASCs did not seem effective. I started wondering if it was the teachers at my school, a problem with the ASC structure itself, or something else I was not aware of.

I was also involved in an informal weekly meeting with my grade group colleagues where we co-planned our week and shared ideas about how to adapt our programs to meet the diverse needs of our students. We experienced shared responsibility for our grade group and shared workload; specifically, less time spent planning for differentiated instruction, increased confidence, decreased discouragement, high quality, innovative instructional practices, and a renewed joy about teaching.

Data Sources

The research was completed at a mid-sized elementary (approximate 400 students, grades K-5) school in an urban neighbourhood in the lower mainland of British Columbia. While there

was a disparity in social class and income amongst the students, the vast majority of the population were Caucasian, and more than half were affiliated with Christian faith groups. There had been significant turn-over amongst teaching and administrative staff. Half the teaching staff had been at the school four years or less, and there had been a new vice-principal each year for five years. The district was expanding rapidly as many new homes were being built to accommodate the growing population. In 2019 elementary schools shifted from K-6 to K-5 to reduce overcrowding in elementary, and two new schools were being built, opening in 2021 and 2022, respectively.

The global pandemic of COVID 19 in 2020 had an impact on this research. Before starting the investigation, an institutional review board approved the study's details (see Appendix A). The research design originally included the choice for participants to have an in-person interview following district health and safety protocols around handwashing, wearing a mask, and maintaining social distance. Part way through the ethics review process, all in-person research was denied, and the design had to be changed to exclusively online interviews. This may have affected the study results as body language, tone, and energy are more challenging to read through the screen. It may also have affected who was willing to participate as teachers had varying comfort levels using technology.

There were some ethical considerations to completing research at a mid-sized school. First, there was a slight chance that participants' co-workers could find out who had participated in the study. Second, there was a slight chance of emotional discomfort to participants, and measures were taken to minimize this. Participants were informed of the risks in the letter of informed consent. Third, I had a previous relationship with each of the participants, which may

have influenced their responses. Finally, by selecting only a small sample, some voices from the staff were not represented in the study.

Since this study aimed to find ways to improve ASC, it was necessary to include participants who had varied experiences. As a fellow participant in ASC, I had made casual observations about teachers' experiences based on their verbal and non-verbal communication. As a professional development committee member, I had focused, but still informal, conversations with teachers about their experiences and wishes for ASC. These conversations and observations formed the basis for my selection of a purposeful sample. A purposeful sample was chosen because it intentionally selects a sample that can best inform the researcher of the problem under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2017). I extended an e-mail invitation to eight teachers who had expressed various opinions about ASC, generally ranging from "it is an obligation" to "it is a valuable experience." Of the eight teachers invited, six agreed to be interviewed. The participants provided informed consent via e-mail.

My sample included classroom teachers teaching grades two, three, four, and five, and one non-enrolling teacher. To increase anonymity, I neither disclose the position of the non-enrolling teacher nor attach grades to each participant (except for "Grade Two Teacher," who chose this name as her pseudonym).

Data collection took place employing in-depth personal interviews using video conferencing technology that was available and familiar to all the participants. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim using a transcription application. The interview consisted of three open-ended questions with a set of prepared additional questions (see Appendix B) to prompt participants to give detailed answers to the questions. Open-ended questions were used to allow the participants to have more choice over the responses they shared

in an attempt to capture their individual experiences. Attention was given to choosing the wording of the questions to avoid embedding a bias. Participants were given the main interview questions by e-mail prior to the scheduled interview to provide them with time to think about their responses.

To minimize confusion over roles between researcher and colleague, I assured the participants that only their responses to the interview questions and not any information from our prior collegial relationship would be used in the analysis. I refrained from adding personal comments and focused on hearing the voice of the participant. Field notes were taken during the interview to record observations of body language, tone, and any other non-verbal communication that stood out during the interview since this information could be lost in the data when just transcription was used (Gibbs, 2010). Reflections were added to these notes immediately following each interview.

The data were prepared for member checks by reconciling the digital audio recording with the transcription. I chose to remove verbal errors such as “um,” “uh,” and repetitions from the transcript to make reading smoother for the participants and simpler for later analysis (Gibbs, 2012). Member checks are a tool used in qualitative research to increase the trustworthiness of the data by allowing participants to check that the transcript says what they intended to say (Hallett, 2012). The participants in this study were e-mailed the prepared transcripts and given one week to read them over and to alter, add, or delete any items that they did not want in the final analysis. After the member checks were completed, the transcripts were anonymized, and all previous copies of the data were deleted.

I had difficulty hearing “Kayla” during her interview, so I put on headphones to hear her more clearly. As a result, the recorder did not pick up any of her side of the conversation. I

noticed this immediately following the interview and decided not to re-interview her because I had more participants than I needed and, I thought the repeated interview might not be as authentic. Instead, I used my written notes and recorded responses from the transcript to create a document that captured the key things that Kayla had said. This document was then sent to Kayla for her member check and was included in the analysis. Throughout the results, I refer to the things that Kayla told me during her interview and member check, but I could only supply a few direct quotes that I extracted from my notes. A detailed description of my analysis follows.

Data Analysis

I read through the data several times to illicit an intuitive response and identify patterns and possibilities (Miles et al., 2014). I used my field journal at this stage to note hunches, questions, and possible codes. I also included reflections and responses to the data and noticed places that I would need to be careful about managing my bias, especially regarding collapsing my codes prematurely. I shared my initial patterns with my supervisor and used her feedback to create descriptions for my codes. Next, I used descriptive coding to organize the data. I took note of how codes might be clustered to reveal themes (Miles et al., 2014). I colour-coded and highlighted my codes on paper copies of the transcripts. An expert reviewer (supervisor) checked the data and codes for legitimization, and the feedback was used to revise the analysis before writing up the findings. I did some of the evaluation coding at the same time as descriptive coding. I used + and - to indicate positive or negative. Neutral comments were left unmarked. I completed the remainder of the evaluation coding after the data were organized into an Excel table. The table listed participant, page number, direct quote, code, evaluation, and, in some cases, side notes that I added during analysis. Since this was a form of coding often used in evaluating a program or policy (Saldana, 2009), it closely aligned with my goal of

recommending improvements to ASC. I cross-referenced the responses to compare the cases and determine whether there was agreement amongst the participants regarding which themes were positive, negative, or neutral. The data table was extremely useful during analysis. I was quickly able to sort and re-sort data according to different criteria. I was also able to easily refer back to my transcripts to gather additional context around quotes to ensure that I was accurately representing participants' voices.

Findings were reported using thick descriptions to “take us to the heart” of participants' lived experiences with ASC (Geertz, 1973, p.18). Care was taken not to objectify the participants. Direct quotes from the participants (except Kayla) were used to provide evidence for the findings in each participant's own voice (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Finally, the data were used to create a list of recommendations for future ASC.

Managing Bias

Bracketing was done prior to analysis to make myself and the reader aware of the biases and assumptions that might influence this study and were included in the method section to allow the reader to make their own decision about the credibility and trustworthiness of my interpretation of the data. Bracketing was ongoing during analysis, and some of this was included in my results. Since this study investigated a small sample of teachers at a specific site, I acknowledge that it is not a representative sample. It may be useful in comparing elementary teachers in the same district participating in ASC but could not be used to represent teacher experiences of collaboration more generally. Allowing participants to member check the transcripts to ensure that their meaning and intent was clear may have reduced researcher bias and ensured that the participants' voices were captured. Having the data analysis checked by an expert reviewer (supervisor) further reduced bias.

Strength of study

I chose to make my participants as real as possible by using their self-descriptions and using a pseudonym of their choice. By using open-ended questions, I gave the participants more control over their responses rather than pushing my own agenda. Where ever appropriate, direct quotes were used to provide description and evidence in the participant's own voice. I used thick descriptions that expressed the tone and context of the interview to portray the essence of the phenomenon. I described how the findings would be used and included my interview protocol in the document. My sample included representation of primary, intermediate, and non-enrolling teachers.

Results

In keeping with phenomenology's purpose of finding *meaning*, I interpreted the underlying message that emerged from the data as this: That participants wanted a guaranteed pedagogical return on their time investment. I grouped the clusters of meaning into themes (structure, purpose, how we work together) which were factors that participants considered when determining whether ASC provided them with the experience they were seeking. My results present textural and structural descriptions to describe what and how the participants experienced the phenomenon. One of the things that came through the voices of my participants was a constant weighing of options. They were willing to invest significant time and energy into ASC, but only if it was time they considered well spent. They expressed tension between meeting their own needs and meeting the needs of the school as a whole. "I'm only one out of a staff of like 30" ("Andrea"). They wanted to choose the topic most relevant to them, but they also considered the group members they would work best with. They seemed to want something they could count on, which supported them as teachers and their work with students. They also expressed

frustration with how ASC was organized, and most of the recommendations that teachers provided were structural.

Structure

Structure was the most talked about theme throughout the interviews. This was divided into two categories: the external ASC structure and the internal structure of the sessions themselves.

External ASC Structure

Participants found the external structure of ASC to be too restrictive regarding the timing of the sessions and group size. Their comments gave me the impression that they felt that their informal collaboration was very worthwhile to them but that the structure of ASC undervalued it. “Weren’t you grade one teachers doing collab[oration] every single week?...Why is that not considered? Why does it have to be at these structured times with so many rules?...It’s a little bit frustrating because I collab[orate] with teachers every single day” (“Ashley”). She later added, “I think the policy around collab is too strict. I do not like that it has to be on set days with [a] set number of people for a certain amount of time. Some of us work better in shorter chunks more often than two hours a few times per year.”

The number of people required per group came up several times as a challenge. “Nadine” said:

One of the trickiest things with the [ASC] is you have to have a group of so many people. And it's hard sometimes to find more than one person who wants to do the same thing you want to do than one person. Sometimes that's way more productive; doing the thing with that one person than it is having like a group of

five, you know, so that some of the rules that they've given us have kind of hampered us a little bit.

The requirement to have four people per group caused some people to join groups that they were not interested in and other potentially smaller groups did not happen. “Some of the criteria for collab seems restrictive...[for example] that a group needs to be at least three or four people. I can see an inquiry together with the teacher-librarian, for example, be an excellent way to collaborate and would be so very practical” (“Michelle”).

Five of the participants compared the informal collaboration they did regularly with the required structure of ASC and expressed both positive and negative differences. Grade Two Teacher said, “I like to send e-mails to teachers who I think can help me sooner, rather than waiting until the ASC date.” They used words like “authentic” (Ashley) and “spontaneous” (Nadine) to describe how they regularly met with or emailed other teachers to share ideas and resources as needs or inspiration arose. This was in contrast to ASC, where they felt they needed to save their ideas for the scheduled meeting. Nadine talked about collaborating “before it was a sanctioned thing” and said she would continue to do it with or without the day off. Kayla described informal conversations with the English Language Learning teacher and the Child and Youth Care Worker in the lunch room where they planned lessons, and she invited these colleagues into her classroom. This implied that she did not think she needed ASC time to collaborate effectively with colleagues. Both Michelle and Ashley recommended that teachers have more control over how they spend their ASC time and provided suggestions on how to account for the time to qualify for the days off in lieu. “I would love to see [ASC] ‘credit’ be given for after-school workshops...even if they are ‘one-offs’” (Michelle). Ashley offered a similar recommendation. “I wish we could just sign off when we do it and report out at a staff

meeting for 20 minutes how [ASC] is going throughout the year. Then fill out a log to make sure we complete all 10 hours or whatever it is.”

One of the positive distinctions that the participants made between informal collaboration and ASC was that ASC “encourages a longer period to pursue a topic” (Michelle). Ashley described an ASC where she did a book study and said that she “needed to stick with it for the whole year, and try it, and play with it” She also described a math ASC that she did concurrently with district workshops.

We were learning so much at these [district workshops], but it was hard to apply it because they were all going so fast, and school is so busy. So that collab time...I would first debrief the last [district workshop], we went to and see if there's any resources, we need to get ready from that [district workshop], and then we would trouble shoot how our guided math was going, and what we needed to do practically.

Along those same lines, participants talked about time to think and plan. “It’s just nice to have time to think of how your classroom runs” (Grade Two Teacher).

Nadine talked about the desire to be productive and described productivity as:

...having the time to really sit down and think about unit plans and stuff like that because our days get so busy that sometimes we just don't have time to think about that. We don't do what we did in university when we developed these gorgeous unit plans.

The timing of ASC (two hours following a full day of work on a Wednesday) was also problematic for half of the participants. Kayla mentioned more than once that she was tired after school and had a desire to be more ‘with it’ so she would get more out of ASC, but felt that she

was too drained at the end of the day. Grade Two Teacher said, “I want to experiment and see if...it would be easier for me to dive into reading, thinking, and planning on a fresh day, rather than at the end of a full day where I am too tired to think.” Michelle said, “another challenge for me is the fatigue I feel at the end of the day. I just want to put in my time and get out as fast as I can.” These comments implied the participants’ desired to be fully engaged in their learning because they knew it would make it more valuable to them, but the time of day was problematic.

Internal Structure of ASC

The internal structure of the ASC sessions themselves was also an important topic for my participants. Because there was really no one in charge, and there was no system for establishing groups or group leadership, each ASC varied widely in its format and efficiency. Participants had concerns about choosing a group, how the meetings were run, and accountability. Several participants mentioned weighing what was being offered with their decision whether to join a discrete group or to participate in ASC at all. If someone had an idea and ‘offered’ a group, then participants expressed more positive experiences.

It would have been nice if people would come with their ideas before, like, "this is what we want to do." Whereas I feel like at the first initial meeting, a lot of people are like, "I don't know what I want to do, what are you doing?"...You kind of make a decision right then and there because you need to because everyone needs to know by that day. (Grade Two Teacher)

Michelle also mentioned planning in advance: “...halfway through October, that's when you need to have a plan. Unless people plan ahead the year before and be more farsighted.” When groups were formed without pre-planning, participants did not feel they got as much out of them. The mention of “offer” (Andrea) is interesting because leaders are just colleagues with an idea. If

no one came forward with an idea, then participants found themselves scrambling to make a plan.

Participants had less than positive experiences when sessions lacked focus or became “more of a venting session” (Andrea). Andrea went on to say: “It is extremely challenging when group members decide that it is okay to go completely off track. I’ve left after school sessions feeling very defeated when this has happened.” Participants seemed to want a plan. “It would be nice to have an outline of how after-school collab would be the most successful” (Grade Two Teacher). At the time of the interviews, several participants were in an ASC that they considered a positive experience. Andrea mentioned the leader of the group. “She’s exactly the way I want a leader to be. She comes with chart paper; she comes prepared, and we kind of know what we’re going to be doing each session.” Several participants also described positive experiences of co-creating a plan for the meetings. “I think we set a focus at the beginning. Set a goal. Then we kind of set an agenda, and then we slowly moved through that agenda” (Ashley).

A tension that was raised several times was the issue of accountability. Some participants felt like their colleagues may not have been fulfilling their ASC responsibilities but were still getting the day off.

I was in a group with two other colleagues focusing on restorative circles, and at one of the sessions, I was the only member that showed up. One member was completely unaccounted for, and the second member decided to use this time to clean up the math cupboard. And then I just said, how is this after-school collab?

(Andrea)

Michelle speculated as to why this may have been an issue and expressed an appreciation for people who had tried to remedy it.

Perhaps some other people don't necessarily want to be there because they are trying to just meet requirements in order to get their day off. Then what can happen is that it falls on a few conscientious people, who then give the stability like I feel like you and [past colleague] have done. I really valued that; I liked it. Other participants were less concerned about accountability and more concerned with independence. Grade Two Teacher expressed tension about the subject while emphasizing trusting teachers. "How do you make it so it's the most purposeful, but you're also trusting teachers to do what they need to do." Nadine fully trusted that her colleagues used their time appropriately.

It's probably the odd person that's not [fulfilling their ASC responsibilities], but they're not usually in the group I'm working in. Like usually the groups that I've worked in, people are extremely professional and extremely dedicated to whatever it is that they're doing.

It was difficult to account for the differences of opinion amongst the participants. It could be that some participants had not had any negative experiences like the one described by Andrea, or it could be more a product of a personality that seeks the positive in people. I had to bracket myself here because I tended to fall into the group that wanted to keep everyone accountable.

While structure described the participants' experiences of *how* ASC was run, purpose illuminated what participants wished to get out of their experiences.

Purpose

Purpose encompassed the reasons why the participants were involved in ASC. These included learning, materials and resources that were immediately applicable in the classroom, and ways to improve practice.

Learning

All my participants talked about learning. “I love learning more. I’m one of those people that just want to learn more. I want to know more about what I’m doing. I want to get better...” (Nadine). Andrea said, “I do also think [that] any type of learning is good learning.” There was a preference for learning about topics they were interested in. “I think there was one year there wasn’t anybody doing the question that I was interested in, and so I just kind of went along and didn’t feel like I really got that much out of it” (Nadine). Kayla said that sometimes you just had to choose what others were doing, even if it was not really what you were interested in, but you could still learn something new. She talked about having a positive attitude and being open-minded, and willing to learn even if it was not a preferred topic. All my participants expressed a positive attitude toward learning.

Applicable

There was a strong preference for ASC that could be applied in the classroom, and all six participants mentioned it. These included unit and lesson plans, resources, and visuals, to name a few, and were linked with participants’ day-to-day work. Michelle described a positive ASC experience that stood out for her.

It was a ‘make and take’ format. We had a product in our hand that we were ready to use, that we both had invested in, and it was around curricular subjects that we wanted to cover. We were both really excited about that.

Andrea said, “I’m looking for stuff that would help support my students in my classroom.”

Nadine mentioned wanting “to have something concrete that I’m going to take back to my classroom and use the next day.” The participants frequently mentioned subject areas. “I’ve done some math ones and writing ones mostly, with a teaching colleague, and they’ve always been

beneficial because I'm using it now in the classroom” (Ashley). Kayla wanted an ASC where she could plan her teaching of science and social studies in more depth, creating a year map that linked all the outdoor lessons to the learning goals.

Practice

Participants had positive experiences when ASC helped them to improve their practice. These experiences focused less on the day-to-day work of teaching, more on teacher identity and pedagogy, and could involve elements of reflective practice. “I want [ASC] to be meaningful to me and to make me a better teacher” (Ashley). Grade Two Teacher described reflective practice: “At [ASC] I'm kind of just focused on one thing, like writing and writing only, and how do I teach and assess it, and how do I do a better job at this?” Ashley described a book study ASC that stood out for her. “It really changed the way I taught and the way I viewed behaviours in the classroom. So, for me, it was really a life-changing [ASC].” Kayla wanted ASC to be learning that improved her practice.

While learning, discovering, and creating things to use in the classroom, and reflecting upon improving practice are individual goals, in ASC, they were achieved through collaboration with colleagues. The experience of working together was a significant theme that came through the data.

How Do We Work Together?

Working together came up in all the interviews. All the participants talked about the benefits of a team approach, but some also had concerns about group dynamics. A team approach was referred to as “having time to hear what other teachers are doing in classrooms” (Grade Two Teacher) and “...working with and learning from colleagues” (Andrea). Kayla talked about having conversations, sharing resources, and getting ideas from more seasoned

colleagues. Some, like Michelle, were mainly focused on shared planning, while others like Ashley and Nadine emphasized discussion and the sharing of ideas. “I have really enjoyed the discussions and stuff that are coming out and, ‘what do you do when we do this,’ and all that kind of stuff. It’s really good, and the book is really interesting to me” (Nadine). Nadine contrasted this to a book study she did on her own: “It wasn’t the same. Like being able to work with someone else, like being able to read a chapter and then discuss [it].”

Group Dynamics

Group dynamics included the dynamic across the whole staff and dynamics within ASC groups.

Whole School. Since ASC was voluntary, only some of the staff at the school participated, yet several of the participants expressed the desire to work as a whole staff. The desire to “include all of our staff and groups, not just our teaching staff but also our EAs” (Andrea) or to “find a way to all have a goal to work together as a whole school” (Ashley) was a thread woven throughout the theme of how we work together. Ashley and Andrea expressed concern about divisions within the school and the desire and difficulty of getting everyone involved in a meaningful way. When I probed Ashley about this, she said, “[It’s] different peoples’ pedagogies. Where some people want more social-emotional things, and some people want less of that one and go more to the academics. Some people are stronger in different areas... So, I think just differences.” The other participants alluded to it when they talked about colleagues not wanting to be there at ASC sessions. “Wanting to be there is a big part of it. Wanting to learn what you’re passionate about or what you want to improve on” (Grade Two Teacher). None of the participants could offer a recommendation to remedy this, but several mentioned the challenge of finding a common goal. “And I feel like it maybe defeats the purpose

of collaboration because obviously, people don't really want to be there when they haven't found a shared goal” (Michelle). Every participant who brought it up mentioned that they would never want to force anyone to be involved because they wanted ASC participants to want to be there and be fully engaged.

Within Groups. Dynamics within groups were also linked to participants’ feelings about ASC. Group members influenced the choice of what group to join for several participants:

...it would depend [on] who was part of that group. If I knew it was a group where I could learn from them, and we would stay on topic most of the time, then I probably would [do ASC on a topic that I could not apply with my students]. (Andrea)

Others were not so willing to compromise their own learning but mentioned that they considered who was in a group before choosing to join it, even if they were less interested in the topic.

Many participants valued equal contribution. “Everyone shared the onus of being responsible for bringing something, and so I felt like it was equal. Even though someone was leading it, there was still equal representation of sharing” (Michelle). Ashley mentioned a negative experience when contribution was not equal. “I can't do collab when people just give and don't take anything in return...I think the giving and taking in learning and teaching are both important” (Ashley). How we work together came up again when we look to the data to compare tensions between themes.

Tensions between Themes

The three themes (structure, purpose, and how we work together) were factors that the participants considered when determining whether ASC provided them with the desired returns. Participants wanted meetings that were well planned, that ran efficiently, and that took place at

times that suited them. There was tension around the reward of the day(s) off in-lieu. These tensions included accountability versus trust of colleagues and teachers' wish that any additional collaboration or professional development outside of school time should act as credit towards earning the days off. This also described a tension between structure and purpose. Was their purpose to learn, engage in activities that could be applied in the classroom and improve their practice, or was it to earn days off?

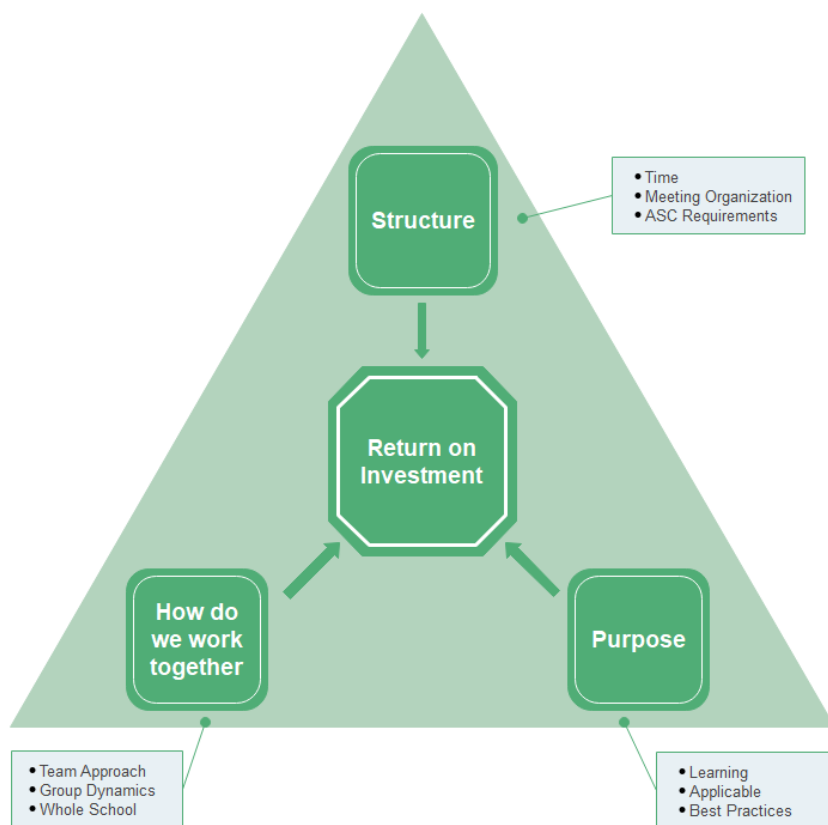
The central tension within purpose was participants' assessment of whether or not ASC was meeting their desire for learning, application, and improvement of practice. In many experiences, it was, but in many others, it was not. Only Nadine did not have misgivings about ASC's ability to achieve her purpose. There was also tension between purpose and how we work together. Several participants implied that one of the purposes of ASC was to unite the school as a whole team. Some expressed a willingness to compromise their own priorities in favour of supporting the team. "I'm only one out of a staff of like 30" (Andrea). Others described the difficulty of finding a common goal, a way to meet everyone's needs, or a topic that everyone would be passionate about. I probed participants about this, but none were able to suggest a solution. Central to this were the unanimous reports that individuals must have choice over what they learned if they were going to be invested and get what they needed out of it and that it should never be forced.

Finally, there was tension between how we work together and both the internal structure of meetings and their purpose. Participants all valued working with colleagues, engaging in discussions, and sharing ideas, but they expressed that this did not always play out positively. Sometimes discussions could get very off-topic or became venting sessions leading to a feeling

that the meeting was a waste of time or that they did not learn anything. Figure 1 illustrates these tensions.

Figure 1

Tensions Between Themes



Return on Investment

All but one of the participants had doubts about whether or not ASC was meeting their expectations. They talked a lot about the importance of wanting to be there, and half expressed that they were not sure they wanted to continue. “I’ve just left feeling like sometimes, why should I even bother” (Andrea). Michelle said, “I think personally for me I am analyzing whether [ASC] is really actually valuable for me. I was largely motivated because [partner] really wanted those days off so that we can go away on the in-lieu weekends.” The other participants expressed that coming in on the lieu days and doing self-directed professional development might have

been more valuable to them. Kayla had opted out of ASC for the past two years and had felt that her self-directed professional development on the in-lieu days had been beneficial. Grade Two Teacher described a year when she opted out. “I found it was a little more productive when I was by myself, just me and the resource and not worrying about what others [are doing] and just focusing on [my own learning].”

The presentation of the tensions I observed and the underlying message about return on investment are examples of my efforts to include thick descriptions of the data beyond simply organizing and restating participant responses.

The experiences of my participants were not unique. In the next section, I compare my results to the literature on collaboration and make recommendations for improvements to ASC.

Discussion

My research revealed that essential components of collaboration might be missing in the *practice* of ASC. While the *design* of ASC included time, leadership, learning and joint work, shared vision, professional dialogue, and community, they were not consistently represented in my participants’ lived experiences of ASC. After evaluating each component, I suggest that an investment in the development of teacher-leaders is a viable first step towards overcoming some of the most immediate challenges of structure, purpose, and how we work together.

Structure

ASC had some structural weakness around the use of time and some inconsistency in the application of leadership.

Time

At first glance, it may seem like ASC’s allotment of time and the resulting day(s) off in-lieu were a strength of its structure; however, several participants offered reasons why they felt

the timing was not ideal. Campbell (2017) found similar results in her Pan- Canadian study where she identifies inconvenient timing as one of the top three barriers to teacher collaboration. Grade Two Teacher, Michelle, and Kayla found it challenging to fully engage in collaboration after a full day of teaching. Kayla suggested that it would be nice to have collaboration time during the school day, and Grade Two Teacher and Ashley mentioned that they would like to meet more often, for shorter periods, but the literature shows that even this might not work. Hargreaves (1998) discusses that teachers did not like having a set time to meet each week because they did not always have something they needed to address, so they did not know what to do with that time. Ashley and Michelle suggested that the timing of ASC be flexible to allow teachers to meet when they wanted to. Completely flexible collaboration might not fit the design of ASC at all; rather, it might fall under the category of informal collaboration.

Ashley, Nadine, Grade Two Teacher, and Kayla shared positive experiences of informal collaboration with colleagues and shared that they do it every day and with multiple teachers. They mainly described getting information about specific students and sharing resources to meet immediate needs in their classrooms. Kayla described co-planning a group project and inviting non-enrolling teachers into her class to teach lessons they had co-created. What my participants are describing fits Hargreaves' (1998) description of collaborative cultures where collaboration is spontaneous, voluntary, can occur any time and any place, and is unpredictable. My data suggests that informal collaboration may not be enough to meet the participants' desire for growth and learning.

Michelle, Grade Two Teacher, Nadine, and Ashley expressed appreciation for ASC's provision of time and space to stick with a topic for an extended period that gave time to really think about their units or practices. This might indicate that teachers could benefit from informal

collaboration in addition to ASC, which is scheduled and occurs throughout an entire school year allowing for cyclical professional learning (Hargreaves, 1998, 2019).

Leadership

While leadership by a planning committee (for in-school) or a facilitator (for intra-district discrete ASC) is built into the design of ASC, data suggested that leadership in ASC was not consistent. Leadership has a vital role to play in collaboration, including guiding the creation of shared goals, building community, setting norms and expectations, and facilitating discussions (Adams et al., 2019; Curry, 2008; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Kuh, 2016; Roy & Hord, 2006). Principals need to nurture the capacity of staff members to build a trustworthy, respectful, and collaborative environment (Roy & Hord, 2006). ASC is unique because the principal does not run it; therefore, teacher-leaders need to take on these roles. Half of my participants expressed that they were not interested in leadership roles.

Most participants shared stories where a lack of effective leadership resulted in negative experiences, especially the feeling that they were wasting time. Participants expressed positive experiences in ASC when there was some form of leadership and organization. They expressed positive experiences both with a single group leader and with shared leadership. An ASC running at the time of the interviews had a group leader whom participants described as prepared and organized. They liked that she had tools such as chart paper and readings prepared in advance. I think it was not a coincidence that this ideal leader was enrolled in a Master of Education program in leadership and mentorship at the same time and was using her ASC as part of her own research.

Several stories described ASC where the group would collaboratively create the agenda for the next meeting at the end of each session. Other success stories included ASC where one or

two different group members would be responsible for the planning and facilitation of each meeting. These examples of shared leadership support the end goal of PLCs where leadership is released to teachers (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Roy & Hord, 2006).

Setting norms and expectations was important to my participants. They valued a combination of accountability, trust, and a desire to know what kinds of activities were acceptable use of ASC time. The literature provides examples where teachers are not sure what they are supposed to be doing during collaboration time (Datnow, 2011; Hargreaves, 1998) and suggests that leaders should scaffold teachers in learning how to work together (Lasky et al., 2009).

The data described teachers' differing opinions regarding trust and accountability. Andrea and Michelle were concerned about the staff they felt were not fulfilling the ASC requirements, often by being present but not really collaborating. Nadine and Grade Two Teacher talked about the importance of trusting teachers, but Grade Two Teacher did express needing clarification about what she was allowed or expected to do with that time. Accountability comes up in the literature usually as a concern of administration, not teachers (Adams et al., 2019). The difference, in this case, might be caused by the reward of the day off, as supported by Michelle's comment that people do not really want to be there; they just want the day off. Accountability is embedded into the design of PLCs (Curry, 2008, Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Roy & Hord, 2006, Kuh, 2016) and GLMs (Adams et al., 2019), and it is usually the responsibility of administration or the group leader. Confusion around trust and accountability might stem from a lack of leadership and will be discussed later in this paper.

Leaders are needed to introduce and facilitate the efficient and purposeful collaboration desired by my participants and the transformative collaboration called for in the literature that

focuses on school improvement. Leaders have a role to play in building community, developing shared goals, and setting norms and expectations. Leaders can support teachers who are not sure about what they are supposed to be doing during collaboration time (Datnow, 2011; Hargreaves, 1998) and scaffold ASC members in learning how to work together (Lasky et al., 2009) by providing multiple levels of engagement (Wenger et al., 2014). In the case of ASC, distributed leadership amongst teacher-leaders seems to be the intention of the structure, but in my data, it was not consistently present or effective. Investment in teacher-leaders then might be a necessary step to improving ASC at this school.

Purpose

The data indicated that learning and joint work were present in ASC, but that shared vision might have been missing.

Learning and Joint Work

Participants voiced that learning and joint work were present in their lived experiences of ASC, and they talked about sharing lesson plans and ideas and co-creating lesson plans. While these were examples of joint work, studies that focus on school reform or school improvements often search for joint work that results in changed practices (Hargreaves, 1998; Meirink et al., 2007; Schneider & Kipp, 2015; Schoenfeld, 2004). Kipp and Schneider (2015) suggest that collaboration should include regular observation and critique of teaching practices. This was not present in my data. Most of my participants' experiences were consistent with studies on teacher collaboration that found that the learning tends to be shallow rather than deeply reflective in a way that challenges pedagogies and practices (Hargreaves, 1998, 2019; Horn & Little, 2010; Howard, 2019; Lasky et al., 2009; Little & Curry, 2009; Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019).

The literature suggests that joint work stays at the surface because collaboration requires a certain amount of disclosure of teaching practices to colleagues that some might find threatening (Nias et al., 2005). Hargreaves (1998) talks about joint work in terms of individualism. Sharing lessons and the like pose minimal threat to teachers' independence but joint work, he says, "requires closer interdependence between teachers and their colleagues; more mutual adjustment of practice" (p. 188). Joint work that changes practices requires a level of trust that may not be present at this school and will be discussed again in my section on community.

My data also suggested that teachers might prioritize learning that was immediately applicable over the deep learning that the literature mentions. Only Ashley described an ASC that changed how she taught and how she viewed behaviours in her classroom. Kayla and Grade Two Teacher expressed a desire to reflect more deeply on their practice but did not recall an ASC experience when that actually happened. The other three participants did not mention changes to beliefs or practices; instead, they focused on lessons, units, and resources that would help them in their daily work.

These differences between participants may be evidence to support Hargreaves' (2019) work that suggests that each teacher falls in a different place on a continuum of learning that ranges from superficial to deep. Or it might indicate that teachers value different types of learning (Noonan, 2019). I suspect that the references to make-and-take ASCs and bouncing ideas off one another would fall in the superficial end of the continuum, where teachers were working side-by-side but not yet sharing responsibility or co-labouring. Or it could be the case that these participants learned more deeply when they were creating a product. Ashley's description of experiences of cyclical professional learning that involved learning, practice, and reflection throughout the year, and a book study ASC that transformed her beliefs, could be

evidence of deep learning at the other end of the continuum. These differences in learning and engagement suggested that future ASC might intentionally look at meeting a variety of needs.

Shared Vision

The experiences of my participants did not demonstrate consistency in shared goals or vision amongst ASC group members. Some participants directly expressed the need to have shared goals or vision, and others described it indirectly, saying that it was hard to find people who wanted to work on the same things as them. These experiences were described as negative. The few stories of ASC where groups did have a common goal were expressed as positive experiences by the participants. These experiences support the existing literature that suggests that shared vision or goals are the drivers of enthusiasm towards sustained collaboration and may offer insight as to why some teachers have stopped participating and others are considering quitting (Adams et al., 2019; Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Hord, 2009; Howard, 2019).

How do we work together?

I included professional dialogue and community in my discussion on how do we work together. Experiences of community were the one component of collaboration that seemed to be almost entirely missing from my data. I discuss this further in the limitations.

Professional Dialogue

Participants' experiences and reflections suggested that ASC members might have needed support to move from superficial to generative dialogue. While Ashley recalled the experience of conversations that transformed her teaching, the bulk of professional dialogue that my participants identified was around sharing ideas and resources, working in grade group teams, and discussing specific students. These findings are consistent with the literature. Tichenor and Tichenor (2019) noted teachers' tendency to work in grade-level teams and discuss particular

students. Much of the literature on professional dialogue reflects that teachers prefer to share ideas and get along rather than engage in critical feedback (Hargreaves, 1998; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018), deep exploration of evidence (Little & Curry, 2009), and examination of practice that might lead to disagreements and challenged beliefs (Datnow, 2011).

The literature suggests that a prerequisite for deeper conversations might be “norms that allow for frank, intentional, and possibly critical conversations anchored to student data that can inform teaching and organizational improvement plans” (Lasky et al., 2009, p. 106). These norms could take the form of protocols (Lasky et al., 2009; Little & Curry, 2009) or facilitated generative conversations (Adams et al., 2019). Both PLCs and GLMs indicate that the norms of structured dialogue should be modelled and facilitated by leaders (Adams et al., 2019; M. Curry, 2008; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Roy & Hord, 2006). Laskey et al. (2009) found that it takes training and skill to facilitate deep and generative learning conversations.

Leaders might also need to present and model conversations as valuable joint work. While my participants shared that they enjoyed bouncing ideas off colleagues and getting ideas from them, I got the sense that they considered too much talk to be a waste of time. I wondered if their professional dialogue was not meaningful to them because it did not go deep enough or challenge them. One of the struggles of leaders within PLCs and the GLM is to ask questions and provide prompts that encourage deep and demanding versus polite and evasive conversation (Lasky et al., 2009; Little & Curry, 2009). The only descriptions of deep and generative dialogue from my participants were book study ASCs where they described reading a chapter and talking about it. Perhaps in these cases, the book itself acted as a facilitator of discussion.

Community

A caring and trusting community might be missing in ASC. The transcripts revealed that a sense of community was not consistent between ASC groups. Nadine mentioned a grade group ASC where she felt very supported, and this sentiment was similar to the PLC model that includes supportive relationships (Hord, 2009), but most comments from participants that could be linked to community were expressed in terms of people they felt they could work well with or learn from. Andrea talked about a combination of group members who worked well for her because they were people upon whom she could depend. Here Andrea could have been referring to a level of trust amongst group members, but it seemed to me that she was more likely referring to work ethic. Grade Two Teacher described catching up on how members were doing and how their mental health was as “getting sidetracked,” suggesting that she may not feel that community-building activities had a place in ASC. These findings were consistent with studies showing that teachers tend to “get to work” rather than build relationships (Lasky et al., 2009). The only mention of being vulnerable and open was when Ashley shared an experience of ASC at a different school. This suggested that in some schools, ASC does include a community of trust and that perhaps this school site was not representative of all school sites in the district. Possible barriers to community at this school might be contrived collegiality or a balkanized culture.

Contrived Collegiality. Participants shared some stories that could be interpreted as contrived collegiality. Nadine’s experiences with early ASC groups where administration regulated the sessions closely matched Hargreaves’ (1998) description of contrived collegiality where collaboration is run by administration, compulsory, implementation-oriented, and fixed in time and space. Interestingly, my participants voluntarily worked in groups that did not interest

them, rather than opting out. They mentioned going along with the group, doing what everyone else was doing, or participating to be seen as a team player. I wondered if they did this because of a lingering effect of the administration run ASC, to get their days off, or because of some other reason?

Balkanization. Another possible barrier to community in this school might be the balkanization of staff which Hargreaves (1998) describes as patterns of interrelationships between teachers that mainly consist of working in smaller sub-groups with little interaction between other staff or groups at the school. Several participants described the staff as divided. In balkanized cultures, staff could be very collaborative, but only within their sub-group (Hargreaves, 1998). Balkanization involves a diminished sense of empathy for groups other than one's own (Hargreaves, 1998), which might contribute to the participants' experiences of difficulty in choosing a group, finding people they work well with, and creating shared goals. Nias et al. (2005) found that when groups work together, they learn more about one another's strengths and talents and everyone is valued for their particular contribution. Balkanization, then, might have led to empathy within groups at the school. The division between groups could account for the participants' experiences that described the paradox of both a collaborative culture and divisions within the school. Balkanization might also explain participants' feelings of a lack of 'whole school' collaboration.

Whole School. Ainsworth and Oldfield (2019) describe whole school as one where staff have a sense of purpose, shared school culture, involvement in the decision-making process, and relationships with management. Some participants expressed a desire to work together as a whole school or have whole school goals. This might mean that they wished that all staff members opted to participate in ASC, but participants could also have been expressing the desire

for a *sense* of whole school as described by Nias et al. (2005). While collaboration designs might be applied to a whole school in an effort to improve student outcomes, Nias et al. (2005) shared that the *sense* of a whole school as experienced and expressed by school staff was something distinct from an entire staff participating in collaboration. In cases where staff *felt* the *sense* of whole school, staff were conscious of their interconnected working relationships (Nias et al., 2005). Their findings indicate that it was possible to develop a sense of whole school in smaller elementary schools provided there was a strong sense of community, shared educational beliefs practiced in classrooms, staff regularly working together, and members relating well to one another (Nias et al., 2005). Since the school under investigation was a smaller elementary school and showed evidence of a collaborative culture, it might be possible for it to develop a sense of whole school. The commitment of leadership and staff to the gradual building of a strong community would be a good start, but developing shared educational beliefs and practices might be a long way off.

As much as my participants might like to see all staff involved in ASC, each of them mentioned that it could not and should not be forced. The importance of collaboration being voluntary is also reflected in the literature. Hargreaves (2019) suggests that forcing collaboration might cause a decrease in informal collaboration, and Nias et al. (2005) suggest that it might even increase divisions within the school.

Shared Responsibility. Also missing in the transcripts was the mention of shared responsibility. Participants talked about “my class” and “my students” rather than “our” students. Part of community is deprivatization of practice where staff view themselves as part of a team that is responsible for the learning of all the students in the school (Adams et al., 2019; Roy & Hord, 2006). Collaboration with shared responsibility means that teachers improve their practice

together and take collective, rather than individual, responsibility for implementing what they discover (Hord, 2009). There was no indication of this type of joint work in my data.

Since a caring and trusting community is an essential component of collaboration (Adams et al., 2019; Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Curry, 2008; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Hord, 2009; Howard, 2019; Kuh, 2016), this missing element might be keeping ASC from meeting teachers' needs and expectations.

Recommendations

The main component of collaboration missing from my participants' perceptions of ASC was leadership: Leadership to shepherd people towards a shared vision and leadership to nurture and sustain a sense of community. Even though principals cannot direct teachers' participation in ASC, they have a role to play in nurturing the capacity of staff members to build a trustworthy, respectful, and collaborative environment (Roy & Hord, 2006). They can also encourage and support the development of teacher-leaders within their schools. Teacher-leaders, if adequately prepared and supported, can address missing and lacking components of ASC. This preparation and support would involve:

1. Administration at the district and school level train and support teacher- leaders.
2. Teacher-leaders implement strategies to build a caring and trusting ASC community.
3. Principals and teacher-leaders guide the school and ASC groups in creating a shared vision.
4. Teacher-leaders guide the setting of norms and expectations for ASC time. This could address the current problems of accountability and meeting efficiency.
5. Teacher-leaders model and facilitate generative conversations.

6. School-based professional development committees plan ASC that meet various teacher learning needs and multiple levels of engagement.

Other Recommendations

Keeping in mind that building trust and learning how to collaborate develops gradually over time, I would not suggest making any more immediate changes other than those listed above. The exception to this is that it may be worthwhile to present a case to the district requesting more flexible ASC times.

Instead, the progress towards a shared vision, a caring and trusting community, consistent and effective leadership, and deep and meaningful conversation and joint work should be re-assessed in three years. This assessment should consider whether changes to ASC have attracted more teachers or caused more to opt out.

Limitations

Since this study included only a small sample from one school, the findings cannot be automatically applied to all cases of teacher collaboration. It may, however, be useful in understanding the ASC experiences of similar-sized schools within the same district.

While it was a deliberate decision to ask open-ended questions to capture teachers' lived experiences, during analysis I discovered a few questions I wished I had asked. First, I would like to have known how each participant defined teacher collaboration and what they hoped to get out of their participation. Second, I think the absence of talk about a caring, trusting community in the data might be more a reflection of the weakness in the interview questions rather than an indication that no community is present in ASC. The questions asked for standout experiences, types of collaboration, and recommendations. It is possible that community was

present but did not stand out to participants, and that if I had asked a question about community, more experiences might have been shared in the interviews.

Missing from the data were dissenting voices. The only two people who declined to participate in my study were two who had participated in ASC in the past but decided not to continue. I had been very interested in hearing from them partly because I thought they might offer different viewpoints than the other participants and partly because I did not know them very well personally. In my past efforts to improve ASC, I had been merely guessing about what they might want or need.

Two of my transcripts were not as rich as the other four. First, as previously mentioned, my interview with Kayla was not recorded, so the data I had for her were my interview notes and her notes after member check. Since I did not have direct quotes for Kayla, her voice may not be as accurately represented as the other participants. Second, one of my participants cut out large sections of her “thinking out loud” from the transcript during her member check. I wonder what data was lost in her edits.

The study was designed to be manageable for both the researcher and the participants, so it was limited to one interview per participant. During analyses, as I bracketed myself, I often wished that there was a provision within the method and informed consent to allow me to go back to participants for clarification. There were places in the data where the participant might have been confirming my own experiences or biases, or they might have been saying something different. In these cases, I tried to analyze their words literally rather than inferring deeper meaning. While this maintained the study's trustworthiness, I think some of the richness of the data might have been lost in this process.

Implications for Practice or Further Research

My biggest takeaway from this research was the enormous benefit that can be gained from asking colleagues questions and listening to their answers. I learned so much about them, my school, and teaching that I would never have known otherwise. I also know that my colleagues valued being asked, and they expressed having personal insights prompted by our interview. As a result of this learning, I am going to ask more questions and make fewer assumptions. I want to know what people's goals are and how they would like to meet them. I want to understand why some people used to participate in ASC and no longer do, and what it would take to get them involved again. I am also interested in knowing more about administrators' experiences with ASC and what their ideal ASC would look like. Similar studies on ASC at middle and high schools would be helpful to the district in determining what types of teacher-leader support they might offer.

A concern this research raised for me was the divisions amongst staff at my school. I do think we may have a balkanized culture, and I want to work towards changing that. I would like to start by finding ways to celebrate the great things happening within the school groups. I also want to advocate for staff meetings and ASC that include non-teaching staff such as educational assistants.

Finally, despite being discouraged at the start of my study, I continue to advocate for and provide leadership for ASC at my school. I now have a much better understanding of the role of a leader in general and what my colleagues expect from a leader. I feel much more prepared than I was before to seek out the kinds of support I need to be a teacher-leader and to provide the type of leadership that my colleagues desire.

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Appendix A

Ethics Approval



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Human Research Ethics Board - Certificate of Ethical Approval

HREB Protocol No: 100592

Principal Investigator: Ms. Penny Dalton

Team Members: Ms. Penny Dalton (Principal Investigator)

Dr. Sheryl MacMath (Supervisor)

Title: Teachers' Experiences of Collaboration

Department: Faculty of Professional Studies\Teacher Education

Effective: December 17, 2020

Expiry: December 16, 2021

The Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) has reviewed and approved the ethics of the above research. The HREB is constituted and operated in accordance with the requirements of the UFV Policy on Human Research Ethics and the current Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2).

The approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval is granted only for the research and purposes described in the application.
2. Approval is for one year. A Request for Renewal must be submitted 2-3 weeks before the above expiry date.
3. Modifications to the approved research must be submitted as an Amendment to be reviewed and approved by the HREB before the changes can be implemented. If the changes are substantial, a new request for approval must be sought. *An exception can be made where the change is necessary to eliminate an immediate risk to participant(s) (TPCS2 Article 6.15). Such changes may be implemented but must be reported to the HREB within 5 business days.
4. If an adverse incident occurs, an Adverse Incident Event form must be completed and submitted.
5. During the project period, the HREB must be notified of any issues that may have ethical implications.
- *NEW 6. A Final Report Event Form must be submitted to the HREB when the research is complete or terminated.

**Please submit your Research Continuity Plan to REGS@ufv.ca before beginning your research. The plan can be found here: <https://www.ufv.ca/research/>

Thank you, and all the best with your research.

UFV Human Research Ethics Board

Appendix B

Interview protocol

Teachers' experiences of after school collaboration

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research on after school collaboration. I want to be clear that starting now, I am setting aside my role as your colleague and what I know of you from our past relationship, and I am going to take on the role of researcher. In that role I will only be working with the information you provide me with in your interview today, and nothing that you say will be shared with other colleagues, nor will your participation in this research be shared. Is there a pseudonym you would like me to use for you when I anonymize the transcript?

1. How many years have you participated in after school collaboration at this school?
2. What are some experiences from after school collaboration that stand out for you? Why do you view these as important or noteworthy?
3. Tell me about the different types of collaboration you have been involved in during your time at LME.
 - A) How did that go?
 - B) What are some experiences that really stand out for you?
 - C) Why do you view these as important or noteworthy?

4. Do you have any specific recommendations for after school collaboration in the future?
5. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Possible extender questions:

- Can you tell me more about...?
- Can you give me an example of what you mean...?
- I hear you using the word [], can you define that term for me in your own words?
- What do you think of when I say...eg. collaboration
- What do think about....?
- Can you share a story about...?
- I'm curious why you said...?