

DESIGNING FOR CHANGE: HOW A SCHOOL COUNSELOR FORMED AND
FACILITATED A TEACHER WORK GROUP FOCUSED
ON PROMOTING DESIRABLE TEACHER-STUDENT
RELATIONSHIPS

A Dissertation
Submitted to
the Temple University Graduate Board

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements of the Degree
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

by
Alison Y. Wabnik
May 2020

Examining Committee Members:

Dr. John Hall, Advisory Chair, Department of Policy, Organizational, and Leadership
Studies

Dr. Steven Gross, Department of Policy, Organizational, and Leadership Studies (retired)

Dr. Lia Sandilos, Department of Psychological Studies in Education

Dr. Avi Kaplan, Department of Psychological Students in Education, external member

©
Copyright
2020

by

Alison Y. Wabnik
All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

Educational leaders play a critical role in creating change in schools (Fullan, 2001; Reeves, 2009; Sheninger & Murray, 2017; Ziegler & Ramage, 2017). Increasingly, school counselors are being asked to take on leadership roles during a time of educational reform (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Baker, Robichaud, Westforth Dietrich, Wells, & Schreck, 2009; House & Hayes, 2002; Lewis & Borunda, 2006; McMahon, Mason, & Paisley, 2009; Shields, Dollarhide, & Young, 2018; Young, Dollarhide, & Baughman, 2015). The research on school counselors leading collaborative change efforts is very limited, and the behaviors and characteristics of counselors that influence the formation and facilitation of teacher teams have not been studied. Using a design-based methodology, this study examined how a school counselor organized and implemented an effective work group that aimed to support the formation of desirable teacher-student relationships. The focus of the study was on the planning process that was implemented by myself, the school counselor, not the outcome of the process. The qualitative data that was collected during the process describes the structures and processes involved with the initial planning stages, formation, and functioning of the work group. The data captured the importance that relationships, empathy, planning, and reflection all had on the formation, facilitation, and group processes. Lastly, six design principles were developed for school counselors to use as practitioners when forming and facilitating teacher work groups.

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughters, Olivia and Madelyn. Your constant love, silly laughter, and warm hugs kept me smiling throughout each step of this journey.

May you always have the courage to follow your dreams.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation would not be possible without the invaluable contributions of the members of my dissertation committee to whom I extend my sincere and deepest gratitude. Thank you for your patience and guidance throughout the entire dissertation process. Not only did you share your educational knowledge and expertise, but you also provided me with encouragement, confidence, and inspiration to continue moving forward on this academic journey that was unlike any experience that I have ever embarked upon.

Many others made instrumental contributions to this study. I extend my sincere appreciation to my assistant principal and colleagues who participated in the work group. You are truly amazing people, and I am so thankful that I have the privilege to work with each of you daily. The personal time that you sacrificed to be a member in the group truly speaks to your selfless and caring nature. You made this experience fun, and the study would not have been possible without you. Also, I am thankful for the commitment and dedication you show to our students every day. You go above and beyond to ensure they have the opportunity to learn in a caring, supportive environment that encourages academic growth and personal well-being for all students.

To my parents, my first motivators, thank you for always reminding me of my ability and strength and helping me to reach my fullest potential. Mom, you were my first role model in education. I have learned so much from you by watching you interact with students and colleagues and talking with you about our positive and challenging

experiences in education. You have always been my inspiration, my biggest cheerleader, and my rock. I could not have completed this journey without you.

To Adam, my husband, confidant, and unwavering source of support and love, thank you for always being by my side each step of the way during this academic and personal journey. You listened to my doubts and fears during the tough times, and you always knew how to make me smile by cracking a dad joke or by starting a family dance party. Words cannot express how deeply I love you and appreciate all you have done to help me reach this milestone.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. STUDENT NEEDS: RELATIONSHIPS AND TRANSITION SUPPORT	11
3. COLLABORATION AND THE CHANGE PROCESS	35
4. METHODS	56
5. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	75
6. DISCUSSION	122
7. CONCLUSION	136
REFERENCES	145
APPENDICES	
A. THEORY OF ACTION	156
B. FISHBONE DIAGRAM.....	157
C. CHANGE DRIVERS	158
D. INTERVENTION SESSIONS	159

E. WORK GROUP MEMBERSHIP	160
F. PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE	161
G. RUBRIC: COLLABORATIVE PLANNING PROCESS	163
H. CODES	165
I. INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....	166
J. LIST OF AGENDA TOPICS	168
K. SAMPLE AGENDA.....	169
L. THEMES	170

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Hammar Chiriac's Scheme for Understanding Group Processes (2008)	50
2. Key Moments of Group Functioning.....	87

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Demonstrates a process of change for designing a collaborative planning process to enhance Flex Period.....	57

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Taking a Design Approach to Form and Facilitate a Teacher Work Group

Educational leaders play a critical role in creating change in schools (Fullan, 2001; Reeves, 2009; Sheninger & Murray, 2017; Ziegler & Ramage, 2017). Effective leadership practices and collaborative processes that lead to change are important because transformational, sustainable change rarely occurs through top-down mandates or directives (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Sheninger & Murray, 2017). Increasingly, school counselors are being asked to take on leadership roles during a time of educational reform (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Baker et al., 2009; House & Hayes, 2002; Lewis & Borunda, 2006; McMahon et al., 2009; Shields et al., 2018; Young et al., 2015). The research on school counselors leading collaborative change efforts is very limited, and the behaviors and characteristics of counselors that influence the formation and facilitation of teacher teams have not been studied. This study examined how a school counselor (myself) organized and implemented an effective work group that aimed to support the formation of desirable teacher-student relationships.

Personal and Professional Experience Leads to Focus on Planning Processes and Relationship Building

As a former teacher and current school counselor, I recognize the great value of forming caring, supportive relationships with students. This knowledge was not initially acquired through formal teacher training or by attending an inspirational conference. This

knowledge was acquired through personal experience as a high school student over 15 years ago. When I think back to my high school experience, one of my fondest memories is of my relationship with my high school physical education teacher who was also my swim coach. He knew me as a student, an athlete, a leader and an imperfect teenager. He made a connection with me by checking in with me regularly and showing care and concern for me as a student-athlete.

When I became a teacher, I wanted my students to be able to form a connection with a teacher just as I did. Relationship building quickly became an integral part of my everyday practice in the classroom; however, I realized that some students needed other opportunities during the school day to connect with adults. Knowing the value that I placed on relationships, my principal asked me to be a part of a planning committee to develop an advisory period for our school. An advisory is often a smaller setting within a large school in which the advisory teacher gets to know his or her students and attempts to support them academically, socially and emotionally (Yonezawa, McClure, & Jones, 2012). I agreed to participate on this committee, and I was excited about this opportunity to research, design and implement an advisory period for our students. Not only did I strongly support the vision associated with this change, I also looked forward to becoming a leader in our school by contributing to this reform project. Our committee met over the summer several times, and we used full-day in-services to plan the advisory period for our students and faculty. We assisted in the implementation by presenting the plan at a faculty meeting and by providing the supporting materials and resources needed by our teachers to lead their advisory. I fully and enthusiastically supported this change

effort; however, I quickly learned that the majority of our faculty did not share my enthusiasm. The implementation of the advisory was met with much resistance, and many advisories were ineffective likely for a number of reasons, including low levels of commitment from some teachers. Needless to say, I was devastated. Not only did my efforts to create change in our school seem unappreciated and ineffective, I also was heartbroken that many students were not able to receive the full benefits of the advisory period because many teachers were so against the change.

My first experience with participating in a planning process that was intended to produce meaningful change in a school system was disheartening; however, the experience encouraged me to look more closely at how processes can be designed to create transformational, sustainable change within school systems. Specifically, I was interested in learning more about how a process can impact the organizational culture and structure of a school in a way that can lead to the formation of caring teacher-student relationships.

Teacher-Student Relationships Are an Integral Feature of Schooling

The role and purpose of schools in America have changed over the years depending on the current needs of the country (Graham, 2005). In the 21st century, an increasing emphasis has been placed on job-related skills that will prepare the current generation of students to become successful citizens in a global society, thus requiring a more personal approach to schooling that combines personalized training with a robust education (Sheninger & Murray, 2017). There are several features of schooling that contribute to positive student outcomes, such as the development of life, career, learning,

innovation, information, media, and technology skills. For example, the quality of teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000), effective instructional practices (Hattie, 2009), and a positive classroom and school climate (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009) are all school features that are associated with positive student outcomes.

In addition, the nature of relationships matters. Trusting, supportive teacher-student relationships (TSRs) have a positive impact on student development and outcomes (Cornelius-White, 2007; Klem & Connell, 2004; Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011). TSRs that are beneficial to students and their learning are described as warm and open relationships (Claessens et al., 2016; Engels et al., 2016; Gasser, Grütter, Buholzer, & Wettstein, 2017; Tarlow, 1996). Teachers who foster these types of TSRs often engage in empathetic and responsive interactions, which can lead to emotional security and a mutual respect between teacher and student (Claessens et al., 2016; Engels et al., 2016; Gasser et al., 2017). Specifically, TSRs affect school connectedness (Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson, & Schaps, 1995), student engagement (Cornelius-White, 2007; Engels et al., 2016; Roorda et al., 2011) and student achievement (Roorda et al., 2011). These are the inputs or the contributions of TSRs to schooling. Relationships are also outcomes of schooling, meaning that schooling shapes relationships. The context of schools has a large impact on how meaningful and caring TSRs are formed (Conner, Miles, & Pope, 2014; Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004; Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003; Stewart, 2008). Smaller class size, a positive school climate, and schools that foster a more personalized and academically focused environment promote better TSRs (Crosnoe et al., 2004; Pianta et al., 2003).

Relationships within a school are also an important part of the change process. Sheninger and Murray (2017) state, “Relationships are at the heart of transformation.” (p.237). School improvement efforts are more likely to result in sustainable change when they are led by collaborative leadership teams that are built on trusting relationships (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Forsyth, Adams, & Hoy, 2011; Fullan, 2008; Sheninger & Murray, 2017). Relationships matter, and they have a great impact on the educational change process.

The Design Challenge: Designing a Planning Process to Support Change

South Central High School (SCHS)¹ recently experienced great change. After years of following a traditional schedule of an eight-period day with full-year classes, the school leadership decided to switch to a trimester schedule. The schedule change resulted in a five-period day with most classes only meeting for 60 or 90 days in a school year. As a part of the schedule change, the school leadership added a 30-minute period to the end of the day called Flex Period². Flex Period allowed teachers more time to connect with students by providing academic support, leading a student club or workshop, or monitoring a homeroom. Although this time was provided with the intention of supporting students and their needs, this period was perceived by teachers as a time for teacher planning or student independent study. As a counselor, I found that there was little interaction occurring between teachers and students; consequently, the leadership, teachers and students struggled with Flex Period.

¹ Pseudonym

² It is in reality named after the school's mascot

Although relationships and collaborative leadership are integral components of organizational change, the initial planning process that was utilized to design and implement Flex Period did not take a team approach. According to a former assistant principal (AP) of SCHS, the principal of the building who was hired to redesign the organizational structure of the high school tasked the AP with designing Flex Period. There was no committee developed or feedback solicited from various stakeholders to determine the purpose or structure for the period. Instead, the AP had to independently research ideas for how to design a flex period. After consulting with one local high school that utilized a flex period, the AP made his recommendations to the principal on how Flex Period should be structured. The principal did not agree with the suggestions made by the AP, so the principal gave a directive indicating how the period should be structured and implemented. Although the AP disagreed with the final decision made by the principal, he had no choice but to follow the principal's orders.

This initial design and implementation of Flex Period occurred four years ago, and since then, three different versions of Flex Period were implemented. The new AP continues to adapt and change the period to attempt to meet the needs of the school, teachers, and students; however, there is still room for improvement. According to the results of a school-wide survey that was administered to the entire faculty in spring 2018, some teachers stated that they take opportunities during Flex Period to build relationships with students. Many teachers, however, utilize Flex Period as a time for academic remediation, make-up assessments or a study hall. Many teachers are not actively involved in the relationship-building process during Flex Period, and they have not been

given the tools, strategies, or continued support needed to know how to cultivate and maintain TSRs. Although the teachers have been given suggestions for activities that could occur during Flex Period, the purpose of the period remains unclear and multifaceted, which has led to various approaches to activities and instructional practices. The current design and implementation of Flex Period is not meeting the needs of the school nor the students.

Ultimately, the administration determined that a redesign of Flex Period for 9th grade students was needed. Given the history of the development of Flex Period and the continued challenges that the leadership had been encountering with the implementation of the period, the planning process needed to be evaluated and redeveloped before moving forward with a subsequent redesign of Flex Period for 9th grade students. This design study explored how a school counselor developed a process to redesign a period of the day. Following a thorough review of the literature on teacher-student relationships, organizational change, and the change process, this design study allowed me to develop a research-based planning process and structure through which the Flex Period Work Group would ultimately design a revised Flex Period for 9th grade that was intended to help teachers form and maintain caring teacher-student relationships during Flex Period.

A Design Study Was an Effective Approach to Address the Problem

A design study has several distinct features that make it well suited for this type of project. First, a design challenge guides the study, rather than a research question. The design challenge is in response to urgent problems of practice that take place in a specific context (Mintrop, 2016). The design should align with problems that the school leaders or

teachers really experience to enhance active engagement and to show respect for the people who actually do the work (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu, 2016). It must also be practical and be within the bounds of the teachers' capacity to grow (Mintrop, 2016). The professional knowledge base is consulted to develop a theory of action and guiding principles (Bryk et al., 2016; Mintrop, 2016). Guiding principles are anchored in relevant research, and they guide the design, the aim of which is to improve the problem of practice. Next, an intervention is designed and implemented with the theory of action and guiding principles in mind, and both the design process and the desired outcomes are measured to learn about what works and what does not (Bryk et al., 2016; Mintrop, 2016). Finally, the result of a design study is the derivation of design principles, which are core elements of the intervention that effectively promote learning and can be transferred to other contexts (Mintrop, 2016).

The Design Challenge and Guiding Questions

Given the context of the situation and what we know about the change process, I wanted to know more about how to design a planning process that would productively move towards the development of an effective redesign of Flex Period that would include a focus on forming and maintaining caring and supportive teacher-student relationships. I wanted to understand how the design that I developed would support the decision-making process of the work group. The design challenge that I presented to the team was as follows: To develop a research-based planning process through which the Flex Period Work Group will productively revise Flex Period for 9th graders. The goal of the new 9th grade Flex Period will be to enhance teacher-student relationships in order to increase

school connectedness for freshman students. The focus of my design challenge, however, is on the planning process that will yield the revised Flex Period, not the characteristics of the new Flex Period itself. In particular, I will examine the interactions among those involved in the planning process and the role of the counselor (myself) vis-à-vis the other participants.

I asked these questions to gain insights into the planning process:

1. What is the relationship between the actions of the school counselor and the formation and functioning of the work group?
2. What is the relationship between the characteristics and behaviors of the group members and formation and functioning of the work group?
3. What is the impact of the proposed and emergent principles and procedures on the collaborative decision-making process?

This focus on developing and refining the planning process that would ultimately result in a new version of Flex Period was meant to orient the educational leaders' focus on the guiding principles that are required to design a planning process that will yield a high-quality outcome for the school. The guiding principles used in this study supported the collaborative decision-making process that occurred in the work group so they could productively design a new version of Flex Period for freshmen. The guiding principles also took into consideration the change process that occurred within the school culture and structure to ultimately enhance teacher-student relationships and school connectedness.

A Quality Planning Process Is Necessary to Create Change

Although the context of the design and the design challenge were specific to South Central High School, this study can be meaningful to all who encounter it because a quality planning process is required to effectively create change in complex organizations such as our current school systems. When a planning process does not exist or when decisions are made in a top-down fashion, transformational and sustainable change is unlikely to occur. The hope is that those who encounter this study can find it relevant to their everyday practice and apply the design principles that were developed to create change and design schools such that today's learners feel supported and are prepared to become productive citizens in a global society. In the next chapter, I will review the literature on teacher-student relationships because TSRs were relevant to the content of the work group, and relationships are also important to the change process.

CHAPTER 2

STUDENT NEEDS: RELATIONSHIPS AND TRANSITION SUPPORT

Relationships Are an Integral Feature of Schooling and Educational Change

Relationships are at the heart of this study. Relationships are integral to educational change and relationships are an important feature of schooling. Since this study focused on designing a process to impact the organizational culture and structure of a school in a way that could lead to the formation of caring teacher-student relationships, an in-depth review of the literature on teacher-student relationships was necessary to inform the work of the team as well as the conversations we had during meetings. This study did not focus on teacher-student relationships but on the work group itself.

Teacher-Student Relationships Enhance School Connectedness

Teacher-student relationships are an essential part of school connectedness (Battistich et al., 1995). Several terms have been used throughout the literature to refer to the concept of school connectedness. Terms such as “school engagement,” “school attachment,” and “school bonding” are pervasive throughout the literature; however, for the most part, they appear to refer to the same components that are currently associated with school connectedness (Blum, 2005). Chapman, Buckley, Sheehan, and Shochet (2014) identified several common components which include affective, behavioral, and cognitive connectedness. These components are broken down into more descriptive aspects of school connectedness, which include students’ feelings about their school, students’ actions or performance in school, and students’ perceptions and beliefs

regarding their school. Although it is difficult to articulate a definition because of the variety of terms that have been used in the literature, for the purposes of this study, school connectedness will be defined as “the belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009, p. 3).

School Connectedness Leads to Positive Student Outcomes

When these components of school connectedness are measured, there are many positive student outcomes associated with a strong connection to school. Students who are connected to school are more motivated, put forth more effort, participate more often and have higher overall academic achievement (Blum, 2005; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009; Goodenow, 1993). In addition to these positive academic outcomes, school connectedness is also considered a promising protective factor for adolescents. Protective factors are characteristics that allow students to handle stressful situations more effectively, increase a student’s ability to avoid risk-taking behaviors, and promote social and emotional wellbeing (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). The National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health (ADD Health) found school connectedness to be a leading protective factor against at-risk behavior in youth including substance use, violence, emotional distress, and risky sexual behaviors (Resnick et al., 1997). Chapman et al. (2014) also found that students who were perceived by teachers as having a high level of school connectedness were less likely to participate in risk-taking behaviors.

Various Individual Factors Impact the Level of School Connectedness

Although there are many positive outcomes associated with school connectedness, fewer and fewer students have a strong connection with their school by the time they are in high school (Blum, 2005). Furthermore, levels of school connectedness can vary from student to student depending upon various individual factors including adult support, belonging to a positive peer group, commitment to education, and school environment (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009).

Adult Support

School connectedness often begins with adult support (Blum, 2005); relationships between students and teachers, administrators, custodians, counselors, cafeteria workers, office staff and coaches are all integral to the development of a sense of belonging to a school community. The time, interest, attention, and support that these individuals dedicate to students are the foundation of strong relationships that foster many positive outcomes for students (Biag, 2016).

Peer Support

Peer support is another important social component of school connectedness. A sense of belonging to a social group that is engaged in positive behaviors often has a positive effect on school connectedness because students who feel they belong to a group typically participate in extracurricular activities, help others, and value educational activities that lead to academic achievement; whereas, involvement with a peer group that engages in risky behaviors can have the opposite effect (CDC, 2009).

Commitment to Education

A commitment to education moves beyond the social realm, and this factor focuses on the educational values of the students and adults in the school. Students who are invested in their future and who believe school is important often have an increased level of school connectedness (CDC, 2009).

School Environment

Finally, school environment refers to a school climate that is safe, accepting, engaging, caring, and supportive. Blum (2005) explains that, “The greater sense of school connectedness among students, the more positive is the school climate” (p.7).

Adult Support Contributes to Social Support for Students

Academic research has focused on each of these four factors (adult support, peer support, commitment to education, and school environment); however, the planning process designed in this study focused on the social support provided by adults in schools. I will now review the literature on social support and its relationship to TSRs.

Emotional Support from Teachers is Strongly Related to TSRs and Positive Student Outcomes

Malecki and Demaray (2003) define social support as, “an individual’s perceptions of general support or specific supportive behaviors (available and acted on) from people in their social network, which enhances their function or may buffer them from adverse outcomes” (p. 232). They identified four types of social support that students may receive from various sources: emotional support (feelings of trust and love); instrumental support (resources such as spending time or providing materials or money);

informational support (information or advice); and appraisal support (evaluative feedback). Their study revealed that students perceive informational support from school and teachers as being very important; however, emotional support from teachers was significant as well in relation to a predictor of students' social skills and academic competence. Therefore, Malecki and Demaray (2003) suggested that "teachers should attend to the atmosphere that they create in their classroom and the perceptions they create that students are cared for and treated fairly" (p. 249). Emotional support from teachers, which includes feelings of trust and being cared for, is strongly related to TSRs and positive student outcomes.

Biag (2016) conducted a qualitative study of the perspectives of school personnel of the types of supports that teachers extend to their students. Emotional support emerged again as a type of support that adults are committed to providing their students in order to help improve their school experience. Teachers described emotional support as maintaining a strong value of caring and addressing student needs through actions such as having an open-door policy, being sensitive to students' emotional states and mental health needs, providing students with supplies, and connecting them with information. Biag (2016) concluded that "Providing these supports help build caring and trusting relationships, which are critical in strengthening students' bonds to school" (p. 51).

Positive TSRs Influence Student Engagement

In addition to school connectedness and social support, teacher-student relationships also influence student engagement (Cornelius-White, 2007; Engels et al., 2016; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Klem & Connell, 2004; Quin, 2017; Roorda et al., 2011;

Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Many positive student outcomes are associated with high levels of student engagement (Klem & Connell, 2004). Engaged students not only have a higher level of academic achievement, but they also “put forth effort, persist, self-regulate their behavior toward goals, challenge themselves to exceed, and enjoy challenges and learning” (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012, p. v). These outcomes are desired by educators, but student engagement can be a complex concept that is often difficult for teachers to grasp (Christenson et al., 2012).

Despite the abundant amount of research that has been conducted on student engagement, no one definition has emerged as an agreed upon standard. Christenson, Reschly and Wylie (2012) described engagement as a “multidimensional construct – one that requires an understanding of affective connections within the academic environment (e.g., positive adult-student and peer relationships) and active student behavior (e.g., attendance, participation, effort, prosocial behavior)” (p. v). More importantly, the authors point out that “[engagement] is not conceptualized as an attribute of the student but rather as an alterable state of being” that is influenced by various factors that involve the individual and context (Christenson, et al., 2012, p. v).

There Are Four Influential Components of Student Engagement

Roorda, et al. (2011) suggested that the influential factors of student engagement can be divided into two categories: teacher behavior and affect and student affect. The category of teacher behavior and affect is broken down into four specific influential factors that lead to student engagement, and they include affective teacher-student relationships, autonomy support, structure, and instruction.

Teacher-Student Relationships

TSRs that are beneficial to students and their learning are described as warm and open relationships (Claessens et al., 2016; Engels et al., 2016; Gasser et al., 2017; Tarlow, 1996). Teachers who foster these types of TSRs often engage in empathetic and responsive interactions which can lead to emotional security and a mutual respect between teacher and student (Claessens et al., 2016; Engels et al., 2016; Gasser et al., 2017). Roorda et al. (2011) explained that emotional security can encourage students to “explore their school environment and become engaged in learning activities”; therefore, emotional security acts as a mediator between TSR and engagement. This claim is based on the central idea of attachment theory which suggests that “positive relationships between parents and children promote feelings of security in the child” (Roorda et al., 2011, p. 494). This attachment perspective is then extended to teachers and students.

Autonomy Support

Autonomy support is another influential factor of student engagement, and it is also a characteristic of positive TSRs (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2011; Gasser et al., 2017; Hafen et al., 2015; Pennings et al., 2017; Reeve, 2006). Reeve (2006) explained, “Autonomy-supportive environments involve and nurture (rather than neglect and frustrate) students’ psychological needs, personal interests and integrated values” (p. 228). In this type of environment, teachers revealed that they experienced students actively engaging in the teacher-student interactions by sharing their thoughts, volunteering and taking control of their own learning in a productive way (Claessens et al., 2017). Hafen et al., (2015) developed the Teaching Through Interactions framework,

which describes teacher-student interactions. Through their research, they determined that autonomy support allows for “an expansion of opportunity and motivation to learn and perform,” whereas, “inattention to adolescent perspectives diminishes opportunity for student growth” (p. 658). Therefore, it is imperative that secondary teachers develop the skills necessary to support students’ need for autonomy and decision making to create a classroom environment that engages students and fosters strong TSRs (Hafen et al., 2015).

Classroom Structure

Although autonomy support focuses on ways that teachers can enhance students’ freedom and choice in the classroom, it does not encourage the removal of structure (Reeve, 2006). Classroom structure is the third influential factor of student engagement, and it is a motivationally supportive feature of relationships with teachers (Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009). According to the Teaching Through Interactions framework, classroom structure includes behavior management (Hafen et al., 2015). Teachers who effectively manage the behavior of their students provide predictable routines and procedures and set clear expectations for their students while positively and proactively addressing student behaviors (Claessens et al., 2016; Hafen et al., 2015). When necessary, they engage in gentle discipline, which involves guiding student behavior and explaining why certain behaviors are acceptable or unacceptable (Brackett et al., 2011; Reeve, 2006). Structure allows for minimal downtime and maximizes varied learning opportunities, which promotes students’ engagement and leads to higher academic achievement (Hafen et al., 2015).

Instruction

The fourth influential component of student engagement is instruction. Extensive research has been conducted to understand how teachers teach and the instructional practices that lead to student motivation and engagement. Lam, Wong, Yang, and Liu (2012) included six important components of motivating instructional contexts within their contextual model of the antecedents and outcomes of student engagement. The components or instructional practices included challenge, real-life significance, curiosity, autonomy, recognition, and evaluation. Lam, Wong, Yang, and Liu (2012) explained, “The more the students reported that their teachers assigned challenging work, integrated real-life significance to learning tasks, aroused their curiosity, supported their autonomy, recognized their effort or improvement, and used formative evaluation, the stronger was the intrinsic motivation they reported in learning” (p. 406). The results of their study indicated that instructional contexts were indeed related closely to engagement, and real-life significance was the subscale that had the highest correlation with student engagement.

Finally, teacher support is another instructional practice that increases student engagement (Guthrie, Wigfield, & You, 2012; Lam et al., 2012). Guthrie, Wigfield and You (2012) explained that “teacher support represents student-centeredness in instruction,” and it may be associated with several specific instructional practices including: assuring success, providing relevance, offering choices, arranging collaborations, and providing themes for learning (p. 626). This idea extends teacher support beyond the social-relatedness context as suggested by Lam, Wong, Yang, and

Liu (2012), and it integrates teacher support as a broad attribute that is closely associated with specific instructional practices. Therefore, TSRs have the potential to influence instruction, which is another influential factor of student engagement.

Student Engagement Is a Mediator Between TSRs and Academic Achievement

The four influential components described above (teacher-student relationships, autonomy support, classroom structure, instruction) all play a role in increasing student engagement. The present study focused on how a school counselor can design a planning process that will ultimately enhance teacher-student relationships; therefore, it is important to note that student engagement is regularly found to be the mediator between teacher-student relationships and academic achievement (Roorda et al., 2011). The study by Roorda et al. (2011) found, “Affective TSRs were associated with both students’ school engagement and achievement. In line with the self-determination theory, the smaller associations with achievement seem to suggest that the effect of TSRs on achievement runs partly via engagement” (p. 515-516). Skinner and Pitzer (2012) stated, “Engagement is a critical contributor to students’ academic development” (p. 24). When looking at the components of engagement that contribute to academic achievement, Skinner and Pitzer (2012) pointed out that, “Although behavioral engagement seems to be the primary driver of actual performance, emotion is likely the fuel for the kind of behavioral and cognitive engagement that leads to high-quality learning” (p. 33). Emotion includes enthusiasm, interest and enjoyment, all of which can be enhanced through caring and supportive teacher-student relationships (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012).

Reform Efforts Focus on Students, Teachers, and School Structures to Build Strong TSRs

Because research supports the idea that TSRs lead to positive student outcomes including school connectedness, student engagement and academic achievement, there have been various reform efforts introduced in schools with the goal of strengthening TSRs. Each reform strategy, intervention or program has a different focus to create change. For example, some programs focus on student behavior by helping them to acquire the appropriate skills needed to establish and maintain strong TSRs (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Other programs focus on training and support for teachers to better prepare them for developing supporting relationships with students (Hughes, Wu, Kwok, Villarreal, & Johnson, 2012; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Finally, some programs focus on altering the organizational school structures that surround relationships with the ultimate goal of reshaping TSRs and thereby increasing student engagement and achievement (Conner et al., 2014; Yonezawa et al., 2012). Each reform approach is slightly different, but they have the same goal of strengthening TSRs. It is likely that certain components of all three approaches are needed to positively impact TSRs.

I will now describe three specific reform approaches that have been used in schools to strengthen TSRs. Social emotional learning focuses on student behavior. Professional development focuses on training and support for teachers. Personalization in school focuses on altering the organizational school structures that surround relationships.

Students: Social Emotional Learning

One example of a reform effort that focuses on student behavior is the implementation of an effective, evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) program. Jennings & Greenberg (2009) defined SEL as “the process of acquiring the skills to recognize and manage emotions, develop care and concern for others, make responsible decisions, establish positive relationships and handle challenging situations effectively” (p. 504). Many SEL programs provide curricula to facilitate SEL in classroom environments which support positive relationship building and the skills students need to sustain these relationships. SEL programs focus on teaching students these skills, but many times they do not offer instruction or support for social and emotional literacy among teachers. Jennings & Greenberg, (2009) suggested that it is imperative that teachers must have the necessary skills and willingness to integrate SEL concepts into their interactions with their students in order for classroom improvements with TSRs to occur. Therefore, reform efforts such as SEL programs that solely focus on student behavior may not be sufficient to enhance TSRs.

Teachers: Professional Development

Although there is a demonstrated need for teachers to develop the skills necessary for cultivating strong TSRs, school districts often assume that teachers already have the requisite skills for this task (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Because teaching is often described as a caring profession, the assumption that all teachers naturally form warm and caring relationships with students is commonly made by parents, administrators, and other stakeholders. Although this is the case for many teachers, this is not the case for all

teachers; therefore, training and support for teachers through various professional development programs have proven to have a positive effect on TSRs (Hughes et al., 2012).

One example of a professional development program for teachers that supports the improvement of TSRs is called My Teaching Partner – Secondary (MTP-S) (Mikami, Gregory, Allen, Pianta, & Lun, 2011). Allen, Pianta, Gregory, Mikami, and Lun (2011) described MTP-S as a program “focused on improving teacher-student interactions in secondary classroom with students aged 11 to 18 so as to enhance student motivation and achievement. The program targets the motivational and instructional qualities of teachers’ ongoing, daily interactions with students” (p. 1034). During this program, coaches are paired with individual teachers over one to two school years, and their aim is to give ongoing, personalized coaching and feedback to teachers on their interactions with students after observing them. The coaches provide a validated, observational assessment of teacher-student interactions by using a tool called the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS; Pianta, Hamre, & Mintz, 2012). Gregory et al. (2017) explained, “The MTP coaches emphasize the social and emotional nature of teacher-student interactions with three CLASS-S dimensions” (p. 40). The three domains of CLASS are Emotional Support, Classroom Organization and Instructional Support. MTP focuses on all three domains of CLASS because all three domains are considered key aspects of teacher-child interactions. Within the Emotional Domain, the coaches look for behaviors fostering positive climate, showing teacher sensitivity and exemplifying regard for adolescent perspectives, all of which promote the strengthening of TSRs. Research on MTP-S found

that this intervention resulted in increases in students' academic achievement (Allen et al., 2011) and improvements in students' observed in-class engagement (Gregory, Allen, Mikami, Hafen, & Pianta, 2014).

Organization: Personalization in Schools

Another approach to strengthening TSRs in schools is altering the organizational school structures that surround relationships to increase personalization (Yonezawa et al., 2012). Yonezawa et al. (2012) reviewed the literature on several reforms that take this approach, including advisory programs, grade-span alternatives, and small schools. They concluded that there is weak evidence that advisory programs are successful in strengthening TSRs due to potential teacher resistance, which often results in poor implementation. On the other hand, there is some evidence that the reconfiguration of the grade transitions and small-school reforms are promising approaches that can lead to more positive TSRs for some populations. Yonezawa et al. (2012) acknowledged the mixed findings in their review of the literature and they indicated a need for more research in this area to help the field understand both which personalization interventions are worth scaling up, and for which populations of students.

Structural reform efforts to increase personalization have recently shifted to focus on curricula and instruction as an avenue to improve relationships through areas such as career interests and the incorporation of technological innovations (Yonezawa et al., 2012). The hope is that teaching that is engaging and filled with high expectations will increase the students' sense of belonging while allowing them to become competent in a relevant area of study.

There Are Three Common Features of All Programs That Focus on TSRs

Across these programs, there are several common features. First, caring and emotional awareness are at the heart of all programs. Whether the reform was focused on the students, teachers or structural changes, all reforms place the student at the center of the reform with the intent of fostering caring, trusting, and meaningful relationships between students and teachers. Second, all programs recognize that school features and school context can impact TSRs; however, teachers' skills and ability to engage students in learning and effectively interact with them to support their emotional needs seem to be the most effective means of improving TSRs. Finally, each program requires strong leadership with a clear vision and mission and ongoing support over a long period of time to effectively create change in TSRs. Because the focus of most teachers is on academic achievement, the leadership of these programs has to make a clear connection between TSRs, engagement and achievement to obtain buy-in from the teachers while supporting them through the change process.

The Ethic of Care in Education Puts Students at the Center of Learning

Within the literature on teacher-student relationships and reform efforts, research strongly suggests that the ethic of care framework is one ethical paradigm that is used by teachers when working with students to form teacher-student relationships. The ethic of care paradigm was introduced by Gilligan (1982) in her book, *In a Different Voice*, which identified that women often turn to care, concern, and connection in finding answers to their moral dilemmas (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). Noddings (1992) applied the ethic of care to education when she stated that "The first job of the schools is to care for our

children” (p. xiv). Not only did she support the idea that educators should prioritize caring for students, but she also suggested the goal of education should be “to encourage the growth of competent, caring, loving and lovable people” (Noddings, 1992, p. xiv). Noddings and other educators who advocated for the use of the ethic of care in education put students at the center of learning and suggested that they needed nurturing and encouragement more than an environment that encouraged competition to achieve success (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011).

With the ethic of care in mind, Noddings (1992) describes relationships in education as having four major components: modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation. Modeling was used by teachers, “to show [students] how to care by creating caring relationships with them” (Noddings, 1992, p. 22). Dialogue is open-ended, genuine conversation that is used to connect the teacher with the students and is often integral in building and maintaining caring relationships. Practice provides the students with opportunities to practice caregiving and to develop caring attitudes. Finally, confirmation is affirming and encouraging the best in others as well as the acknowledgement of struggles or accomplishments. Trust and continuity are necessary for confirmation to be effective and genuine between teachers and students.

Trust Strengthens Teacher-Student Relationships

Trust is necessary for confirmation, and it is also a factor that encourages both teacher and student to invest in a meaningful relationship (Gregory & Ripski, 2008). Russell, Wentzel, and Donlan (2016) explored teachers’ beliefs about how teacher-student trust is developed and the benefits of trust in a school setting. Teacher actions or

things that they did to create trusting relationships with students included demonstrating emotional caring, modeling positive interactions, engaging in helping and supportive behavior, making personal connections, and expressing interest. Student actions also influenced the formation of trusting teacher-student relationships, and many of their actions were similar to the teacher actions listed above. In addition to teacher and student actions, time was another theme that emerged from the data that had a large influence on the development of teacher-student trust. Participants emphasized the need for time to establish, maintain and grow trust between teachers and students. Some teachers mentioned specific amounts of time needed to build trust ranging from three months to the entire year. Time was described as “a means for allowing the group to come together repeatedly and for teachers to get to know students and to understand them better” (Russel, Wentzel & Donlan, 2016, p. 258). Russel, Wentzel and Donlan (2016) concluded their study by finding that teacher-student trust resulted in students being “more receptive to teacher attempts at interpersonal bonding, and both students and teachers were more involved in establishing an intimate, open connection” (p. 255).

Care Is Central to the Formation of Teacher-Student Relationships

Like Noddings (1992), Tarlow (1996) also believes that care is central to the development of relationships. Her study examined successful, caring relationships which resulted in a theoretical framework that outlined eight caring concepts in relationships. These concepts are a part of the on-going caring process which include three phases:

1. Beginning of caring: time, be there, talking

2. Work of caring: sensitivity, acting in the best interest of the other, caring as a feeling, caring as doing
3. Response of the cared-for: reciprocity

Phase One

The first phase of Tarlow's caring process involves time, be there and talking. Tarlow (1996) explained these concepts by stating, "To begin caring, there must be people present, time to do the tasks of caring, and a vehicle for facilitating the process – talking" (p. 57). Time to connect with students is crucial for the development of teacher-student relationships because relationship building is a process (Frymier & Houser, 2000). Without time to interact, the remaining caring concepts could not occur. The amount of time that teachers and students interact varies based on the school; however, Farbman and Kaplan (2005) pointed out that an increase in quality instructional time could promote stronger teacher-student relationships. Farbman (2012) expanded on this idea by cautioning that the amount of time is not the only factor that will lead to stronger TSRs. Farbman (2012) stated, "*how* teachers and students spend their time matters as much as the *amount* of time they to spend" (p. 4). Therefore, the type and quality of the interactions and communication between the teacher and students will greatly impact the relationship building process.

During the time that teachers and students interact, communication will take place to facilitate the development of relationships (Claessens et al., 2017; Frymier & Houser, 2000; Horan, Houser, Goodboy, & Frymier, 2011). Claessens et al. (2017) explored teachers' perceptions of their interactions with individual students in the context of

relationships. The teachers described their communication with students as both formal and informal. Informal communication involved greeting students in the hallway, joking around with students, and engaging in informal talk that mainly concerned mutual interests or interest in one another's life outside of school. Formal talk revolved around the subject matter of the course, coursework or student behavior. Both types of talk were identified as communication that occurs in positive teacher-student relationships.

Frymier and Houser (2000) also found that communication between teachers and students is integral to the teacher-student relationship. In their study, they identified two communication skills, referential skill and ego support, that students found to be important to TSRs and were also predictors of learning and motivation. Referential skill is the ability of a teacher to explain content clearly and facilitate understanding. Ego support meets students' emotional needs by helping them to believe in themselves, encouraging them and motivating them. Both of these types of communication facilitate the development of caring teacher-student relationships while supporting learning.

Phase Two

The second phase of Tarlow's caring process is the work of caring, which includes acting in the best interest of the other, sensitivity, caring as feeling, and caring as doing (Tarlow, 1996). The ethic of the profession guides this phase of the caring process because educators' actions are steered by the question: "What is in the best interest of the student?" (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). The components of their actions include daily, responsive interactions, and they are the building blocks of teacher-student relationships (Claessens et al., 2017; Engels et al., 2016; Gasser et al., 2017; Pennings et al., 2017).

Gasser et al. (2017) stated, “Reciprocal interactions between students and teachers that are characterized by respect, warmth, sensitivity and responsiveness lay the foundation for the formation of positive perceptions of relationships” (p. 2). Reeve (2006) described teachers who are sensitive or attentive to the needs of their students as being attuned. He described their behavior by stating, “Attuned teachers...listen closely to what their students say and make a special effort to be aware of what their students want and need. This sensitivity allows the teacher to be responsive to students’ words, behaviors, needs, preferences and emotions” (p. 232). Ultimately, attunement or sensitivity allows teachers to help students to the best of their ability which can lead to caring, warm TSRs.

Phase 3

Finally, the last phase of Tarlow’s caring process is the response of the cared-for. Tarlow (1996) explained, “The person cared for must then respond in such a way as to perpetuate the process, which involves reciprocity” (p. 57). Brinkworth, McIntyre, Juraschek, and Gehlbach (2017) pointed out that, “TSRs are two-way streets; teachers and students construct these relationships together” (p.2). Because two people make up the ‘relational unit,’ the establishment of a teacher-student relationship requires an investment by both the teacher and the student to be productive and meaningful (Muller, Katz, & Dance, 1999). Based on this fact, Muller (2001) suggested that “the development of the relationship comes about from the factors that encourage each party to invest in the relationship” (p. 241). Muller (2001) explored these factors from both a teacher and student perspective, and the results showed that caring played a significant role in the development of TSRs. Students who perceive that teachers care for them put forth more

effort at school, and “an indicator of a positive teacher-student relationship is when the teacher perceives that the student is making an effort to learn and succeed in school” (Muller, 2001, p. 248). Therefore, caring can be a reciprocal action between both teacher and student to encourage the development of successful TSRs.

Howells (2014) explored the role of gratitude in enhancing teacher-student relationships, and she found that the practice of gratitude can impact reciprocity. She explained that gratitude can be a connecting force that may increase the personal connection between the teacher and student through acknowledgement of what they receive via their TSR. When the practice of gratitude is not reciprocated, Howells (2014) found that teachers became frustrated and had difficulty continuing with their practice of gratitude; consequently, a lack of reciprocity in gratitude and caring can negatively impact the relationship building process.

Several Barriers in Education Impede Relationship Building

Establishing a strong teacher-student relationship is necessary for social support to be provided; however, it requires time, effort, and sustained intervention. There are many factors that can negatively impact the establishment of a teacher-student relationship.

A Teacher’s Perception of the TSR

First, the way teachers perceive relationships can impact how teachers build relationships with students. According to relational schema theory, people interpret moment-to-moment interactions with an individual in light of earlier interactions with this person (Baldwin, 1992). Claessens et al. (2017) explained how this impacts TSRs by

stating, “the relationship a teacher has built with a student over time colors his or her perceptions of moment-to-moment interactions.” (p. 490). Therefore, the teacher’s perception of the quality of the TSR can impact their perception of student behavior which could ultimately negatively affect the future trajectory of the TSR.

A Low Level of Trust

Another barrier that can impede relationship building is a low level of trust and communication between teachers and students. Bryk and Schneider (2003) suggested that there are an interrelated set of mutual dependencies created within the social realm of a school system. All stakeholders within the school system depend on each other to achieve desired outcomes, and with these dependencies, a sense of vulnerability is created. Deliberate actions such as communicating openly and empathizing with each other can reduce these vulnerabilities and build trust; however, a lack of relational trust can increase vulnerabilities leading to feelings of insecurity and a lack of safety which could ultimately hurt relationships between teachers and students and lead to more negative behaviors in the classroom (Gregory & Ripski, 2008).

Organizational Structure

The physical setting and the organizational structure of the school can also impede relationship building. Many school districts in the United States have become large, impersonal business-like organizations with schedules that do not provide consistency for students within the school day. Because of this evolution of the school environment, reform efforts that focus on personalization have called for small-school reforms, which have attempted to “restructure secondary schools in ways that enabled

teachers to spend more time with individual students and develop closer, more productive relationships” (Yonezawa et al., 2012, p.5). One example of a small school reform is First Things First (FTF), which restructured schools into small learning communities. This adaptation to the organizational structure of the school ultimately improved teacher support and student commitment and achievement (Klem & Connell, 2004).

Poor Relationship Building Skills

Teachers’ skills at building relationships with students can also have a negative impact on TSRs. Claessens et al. (2017) stated, “Moment-to-moment interactions between teacher and student are thus the building blocks for their relationship” (p.478). Therefore, if a teacher is unfriendly, unkind, cold or unresponsive to student needs, these repeated interactions can make the student hostile to the relationship. Teachers need effective professional development with ongoing support to ensure that the necessary skills for relationship building are developed and implemented effectively (Gregory et al., 2014).

Student Behavior

Finally, student behavior can negatively affect the development of TSRs. Claessens et al. (2017) studied teachers’ perceptions of their interpersonal experiences with students in both positive and problematic relationships. Problematic relationships were characterized by students who were not engaged in classwork, disturbed other students, were unwilling to engage in contact with the teacher, lied, and were rude. This behavior often persisted even after various conversations with the teacher. Teachers who experienced this type of behavior “reported feeling emotionally exhausted and had more

negative attitudes toward their students” (p. 479). Therefore, student behavior and their level of reciprocity in the relationship can also impact TSRs.

Care, Trust, and Relationships Can Lead to Positive Change

A review of the literature overwhelming suggests that teacher-student relationships are an integral feature of schooling. Many factors influence the development of TSRs, but when educators show care for students, trust can build, meaningful relationship can form, and students can feel more connected and engaged in school. These foundational ideas of teacher-student relationships were important to this study because the ultimate goal of the Flex Period Work Group was to redesign Flex Period in a way that would lead to strengthened TSRs; however, the focus of the study was not on the characteristics or the outcomes of the Flex Period itself. Instead, the focus of the study was on how a school counselor formed and facilitated the work group. Relationships were important to this process; therefore, a review of the literature on collaboration and the change process was also necessary.

CHAPTER 3

COLLABORATION AND THE CHANGE PROCESS

Setting the Stage for Successful Change Relies on Leadership and School Culture

Since this study focused on designing a process that would lead to change within a school system, it was important to consider the necessary conditions within the organization that lead to successful change. First, strong leadership is a critical component when preparing an organization for change (Fullan, 2007; Gallagher & Thordarson, 2018). With the complexities of society and organizations increasing, quality educational leaders are needed to guide and inspire teachers as they work together to create real, lasting, replicable change. When leading an organization, these leaders must connect their actions with purpose. To do this, effective leaders are often characterized by the development of a shared vision and clearly articulate measurable goals and expected outcomes (Holmes, Clement, & Albright, 2013; Sheninger & Murray, 2017). Vision statements are powerful motivators, and they set the stage for the work ahead. Finally, effective leaders realize that they cannot complete the work on their own; therefore, they work tirelessly to build positive relationships with others to create a collaborative culture built on trust and respect (Forsyth et al., 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Sheninger & Murray, 2017; Venables, 2018).

School Counselors are Leaders in Schools

Often times people look to administrators as leaders in the school. Traditionally they are the visionaries and decision-makers that lead a school during a time of change;

however, the role of school counselors is changing. Increasingly, school counselors are being asked to take on leadership roles during a time of educational reform. McMahon, Mason, and Paisley (2009) explain that school counselors are responding to this call by transforming the way they approach their jobs. They are collaborating with other stakeholders, advocating for systemic change and taking on the mindset of an educational leader in order to help all students succeed. These changes in the role of school counselor were first articulated by the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI; Education Trust, 1996). More recently, the 4th edition of the ASCA National Model (2019) outlined professional standards and competencies for school counselors which include acting as “a systems change agent to create an environment promoting and supporting student success.” Based on this new vision for school counselors, counselors are being encouraged to step into new roles that require them to lead and inspire others.

Amatea and Clark (2005) conducted a qualitative study of school administrators’ conceptions of the school counselor role. The results revealed administrators had four distinctively different preferences for the school counselor role: the innovative school leader role, the collaborative case consultant role, the responsive direct service provider, and the administrative team player role. All roles require some leadership skills; however, the innovative school leader role closely parallels the most contemporary counselor role advocated in the 4th edition of the ASCA National Model (2019). This role described the school counselor as “taking an active leadership role with school staff in improving the functioning of the school and the staff as a whole” (Amatea & Clark, 2005). Twelve percent of respondents gave priority to the school counselor taking the innovative school

leader role. Although this was the role that was least described by administrators in the study, Amatea and Clark (2005) suggest that this study should encourage school counselors and administrators to have discussions around how a counselor's unique skill set could contribute to helping the school as a whole during a time of change.

Reform Is Not an Event but a Social Process

Quality leadership can help to set the stage for successful organizational change, but how does change in schools occur? Many people believe that school reform is an event that involves adopting external interventions to meet policy mandates and guidelines; however, Forsyth et al. (2011) disagree. They suggest that reform is a social process that involves collaborative, purposeful actions of school members to bring about authentic reform.

In complex organizations such as school systems, educational leaders are often required to structure and focus the collaborative actions of school staff so they result in effective, sustainable change or reform. In order to do this, they develop processes. A process is defined as "a series of actions that produce something or that lead to a particular result" ("process," 2018). In the case of educational reform, the particular result is change; however, every organization is unique, so each school system requires a unique process to produce the desired result (Brandt, 2003). The educational leaders of each school must use their knowledge and understanding of their school culture and the needs of their students, teachers and community to design a process in a way that is best suited for their purposes.

Design Thinking Is a Process for Problem Solving That Is Well Suited for Educators

One example of a type of process that is used in schools to design school change is design thinking. Gallagher and Thordarson (2018) described design thinking as “a process for problem solving and a method for creative action” (p. 9). Design thinking is a process that is well-suited for educators because it is human-centered, collaborative, optimistic and experimental (IDEO, 2012). All design processes follow a number of core principles (Ertel & Solomon, 2014): developing a deep understanding of – and empathy for – users and their needs; cycling through periods of divergent thinking to explore diverse sources of inspiration; learning through quick cycles of prototyping, gathering feedback, and making necessary adaptations; testing solutions with a small group and scaling up after they have proven effective in meeting the identified needs. Design thinking can be messy and nonlinear, making it difficult for educators to embrace, but the more educational leaders and teachers engage in the process, the more comfortable they will become in adapting the process to their specific needs and context (Gallagher & Thordarson, 2018).

Multiple Variables Will Influence Process Design

I used the core principles of design thinking to design my study, and I also embedded the principles in the intervention. I incorporated the principles of design thinking in the design of the planning process because it is a human-centered process for problem-solving that values that voice of the participants. It uses feedback from the participants to make adaptations to improve the group process. As the group facilitator, I

valued their feedback and used it to refine the planning process throughout the duration of the study.

Also, knowing that processes in schools are complex and involve multiple stakeholders, I also had to consider how teams form, gather and function, as well as how decision-making occurs on teams. All these components had to be considered when designing a collaborative process that was intended to lead to fundamental changes in practice.

Teams Were the Central Site of the Planning Process

A number of authors state that one key to successful change is taking a dynamic team approach (Fullan, 2008; Garmston, 2007; Sheninger & Murray, 2017; Venables, 2018). For example, Fullan (2008) says that when educational leaders develop a genuine vision for the future, the action that follows must include multiple stakeholders. Sheninger and Murray (2017) explain that leaders must include their people in the process, who in a school would include teachers, school counselors and staff members. This is because their insights reflect a range of experiences and perspectives. In order to include them in a productive way, leaders must provide a structure that allows for positive, purposeful peer interactions (Fullan, 2008).

One example of a collaborative structure that can lead to reform at the school level is a professional learning community (PLC). PLCs have been defined in various ways and instituted according to a range of formulations within schools. The main components that characterize a PLC vary among authors, but all typically include the following, from DuFour and Eaker (1998).

- Shared mission, vision and values
- Collective inquiry
- Collaborative teams
- Action orientation and experimentation
- Continuous improvement
- Results orientation

The term PLC is often applied to an entire school, but it is sometimes used to describe a collaborative team. The design of my intervention included the main components of a PLC or collaborative team, and it took into account the need for a collaborative structure by forming a work group of teachers who met on a regular basis to productively design a process to redesign Flex Period.

Team Formation

Once the professional learning structure is in place, team formation begins, and teams benefit from an appropriate work group composition (Conley, Fauske, & Pounder, 2004). Comprehensive, inclusive teams include key naysayers, antagonists, and resisters, as well as teacher leaders who are already working to drive the change (Sheninger & Murray, 2017). Crow and Pounder (2000) studied four teacher teams, and their study identified several major context, design, and process features of the teams. In relation to team design or formation, they found that heterogeneity in team composition is desirable. Heterogeneity can enhance team decision making and team growth, but teams that are too dissimilar may create group inertia, unhealthy conflict, participation imbalance, or other interpersonal process losses. Conley, Fauske, and Pounder (2004) reviewed survey results

that were completed by 174 teacher members of work groups. The findings from these surveys also highlight the importance of having a heterogeneous mix of expertise on teams. The work group in my study included a diverse group of teachers from a variety of departments who were connected through their experience working with 9th grade students, either in class or during Flex Period at SCHS.

Team Gatherings

After a team is formed, leaders set the stage for collaboration to occur by providing time and space during the school day for a team to meet. Kruse, Louis, and Bryk (1994) reviewed surveys of teachers in 15 schools and found that structural conditions support the growth and development of a team. Weekly meetings provide the consistency, continuity, and efficiency that is necessary for building cohesion and trust among team members. Platt, Tripp, Fraser, Warnock, and Curtis (2008) recommend providing a comfortable space that supports productive adult interaction in order to send a message to team members that their time and opinions are valued and that the activities are worthwhile. The design of the intervention in my study took into account the need for time and space to gather; therefore, a consistent schedule and comfortable meeting location were determined to support the work and needs of the group.

If space or time is limited, the use of technology can support creative ways for a team to gather. Platt et al. (2008) suggest that using technology can increase information exchanges and collaboration. Technology such as teleconferencing or distance learning and group texts or emails allow for both formal and informal meetings to occur. Dialogue, discussion and decision-making can occur in these forums as well. Anderson

and Kanuka (1997) studied the impact that online forums can have on group collaboration by surveying and interviewing 23 people who participated in a three-week online interactive session. They found that virtual forums have an advantage over face-to-face meetings in terms of time committed by participants, because travel time is reduced and flexible meeting times are possible. On the other hand, they found that virtual forums can have a negative impact on collaboration in terms of socialization and the ability to communicate. Knowing the importance of flexibility and personalization to the work group's productivity, the design considered opportunities for technology use to support the gathering of the work group throughout the design process.

Team Leadership

One person in a group must be designated as the facilitator, and this facilitator supports the team by ensuring that team members are engaging in quality interactions while remaining focused on the goals of the team (Venables, 2017). The responsibilities of facilitators include guiding the team through steps of protocols to promote dialogue; asking challenging questions; ensuring all voices are heard; maintaining team members' emotional safety, and mediating disagreements and conflict (Aguilar, 2012; Venables, 2018). In this study, the group was led by myself, a school counselor. As the facilitator, I managed the functioning of the work group by planning for team gatherings, building relationships with team members, empathizing with team members, and responding to the group experience.

Planning. A traditional type of gathering is a formally organized meeting. These types of meetings are often announced ahead of time or are part of a regular routine, and

they are often connected to formal structures such as departments. Informal meetings, on the other hand, are spontaneous and do not have a pre-set agenda. They may not be connected to official structures within the school. Both types of gatherings can be productive (Bolman & Deal, 2008); however, Platt et al. (2008) explain that many teachers consider formally organized types of meetings to be time wasters because some leaders do not take the time to plan or organize these meetings to support powerful collaboration. Planning for productive, interactive meetings takes time and effort on the part of the facilitator, and Aguilar (2012) recommends paying close attention to how a meeting is designed because the plan for a meeting guides the work of the team. The plan for the meeting could include articulating the purpose of the meeting and desired outcomes; selecting a variety of structures and protocols to meet the desired outcomes; and planning structures that will best navigate the group's dynamics (Aguilar, 2012; Platt et al., 2008). In my study, the work group designed a process to redesign Flex Period; therefore, the plan for these meetings was used to guide the work group through a series of steps to yield an effective planning process. During these steps, the agendas for the gatherings supported collaboration among all group members and attempted to produce rich dialogue and robust decision-making.

Relationship building. Although leading and facilitating a team requires much attention to the planning and work that will occur, facilitating fellow teachers is a human endeavor. Venables (2018) explains that most team facilitators are often colleagues, not administrators; therefore, their leadership on the team is based on the nature of their

relationships. Because they have no other leverage than their relationships with the group members, the health of the relationships is of the utmost importance.

Relationship building has been found to be a necessary skill for leaders in all types of organizations. Gentry and Leslie (2007) confirmed this after they analyzed the top competencies for leadership development that a variety of organizations are using for leadership development purposes. Based on their scan of data from multisource instruments provided by 101 organizations, the second most popular competency for leadership development was “building and mending relationships.” The popularity of this competency indicates that leaders must not only focus on the work that has to be accomplished but also on cultivating relationships by getting to know others on a personal level and listening to their needs to foster the development of others.

Similar to the research on TSRs, building relationships with team members is also important for fostering relational trust. Bryk and Schneider (2003) conducted almost a decade of intensive case study research and longitudinal statistical analyses to study how the dynamics of relational trust in schools influence reform efforts. They determined that relational trust is built through day-to-day social exchanges that are grounded in social respect. Respectful exchanges are marked by listening to another person’s views and responding by taking these views into account in subsequent actions. They determined that relational trust leads to open, honest conversations with colleagues about what’s working and what’s not which supports a culture of dialogue that is necessary for moving forward with sound decision-making that is more widely accepted by all stakeholders.

In addition to building relationships between the facilitator and the team members, the work of a group is also shaped by the relationships within the team. According to Sheninger and Murray (2017), authentic, trusting relationships propel the progress of a team and make transformational, sustainable change possible. Venables (2017) explores the fundamentals of leading people in teacher teams and facilitating their work, and he suggests that trust is a necessary component in high-functioning teams. Trust within a team is characterized by team members embracing differences in opinion and being willing to ask the hard questions of one another. This type of trust within relationships increases team members' respect for each other as professionals and individuals, which will allow them to openly discuss critical issues that will lead to effective decision-making. Consequently, the work group was influenced by trusting relationships with the counselor facilitator and among group members. Since the goal of the work group was to design a new process that would lead to change related to improved relationships with students, caring relationships and trust were integral to making that change happen. It is important to note that the teachers in the work group are the teachers who will be developing the positive TSRs in Flex Period; therefore, it was imperative that positive relationships in the work group set the tone for the ultimate goal of the group.

Empathizing. Leaders do not only spend time building relationships and trust with group members, but they often take it one step further by emotionally connecting with group members or sharing their feelings in a way that creates an emotional bond between them. This is known as empathy. Empathy creates a sense of oneness or

cohesion with group members, but it also helps group members realize their objectives because the empathetic leader will take their interests into consideration when making decisions (Choi, 2006).

Kellett, Humphrey, and Sleeth (2002) studied a proposed model of two behavioral routes that influence perceptions of an individual as a leader in a small group. One route influences people to perceive leadership from displays of emotional abilities, such as empathy, and the other route influences people to perceive leadership from displays of mental abilities, such as complex task performance. Using structural equation modeling, their results showed that empathy is a key variable which links emotional abilities with effective leadership. Their study suggested that leaders who perceive other's feelings and empathize with them are likely to establish an affective bond that offers benefits to leadership.

Empathy is especially beneficial for leaders during times of turbulence in an organization; therefore, a deep, ongoing understanding of positionality is highly recommended. Gross (2020) describes positionality as the ability "to understand the relative situation of individuals in the organization in a *multidimensional fashion*" (p.29). Each individual in the organization may view a situation differently depending on their position in the organization or their affiliation with a particular group. Accepting positionality can lead to empathy for others as leaders imagine how a given circumstance impacts those within the organization. Considering the benefits of empathy for leaders as well as other stakeholders who are involved in the process or are the final recipients of a

design, empathy played a major role in the facilitation and functioning of the work group in this study.

Responding to the group experience. After empathizing with group members, an effective leader will listen to group members and respond to the group experience in order to improve the collaborative process. Venables (2018) calls this type of leadership “responsive facilitation.” Responsive facilitation often occurs during a meeting; the facilitator will constantly be in tune with pulse of the group and make microadjustments to what they are doing as they lead the meeting. The adjustments are subtle, but they can make a major difference in the group dynamics, productivity and motivation.

Another type of response could occur after a meeting. Mroz, Allen, Verhoeven, and Shuffler (2018) reviewed the literature on the psychological science of workplace meetings, and they found that leaders’ actions taken after a meeting ends can make or break attendee’s perception of meeting success. One specific example of this is seeking and incorporating attendee feedback to inform future meeting design. These actions have several benefits. First, researchers have found that a large amount of time in meetings can be associated with fatigue and stress; therefore, it is important for facilitators to be aware of what features of meetings are unsatisfying for group members. Awareness around this topic can help to adjust the design of the meeting to increase the satisfaction of the group members. Also, soliciting feedback and following through by incorporating the feedback in future meeting design gives the team members a voice. By listening to the team members’ voices and honoring their choices, the facilitator empowers the team (Venables, 2018). As the facilitator of the work group in this study, I intentionally

focused on responding to the group experience both during and after the meetings to give the team members a voice in addition to responding to the needs of the group.

Team Conflicts

No matter how intentional, dynamic, and responsive the leader of a group is, positive and negative interactions between team members will occur. Achinstein (2002) examines teacher communities and explores how these interactions can result in conflict, and she suggests that conflict can be viewed as a process rather than as an event. Westheimer (1999) suggests that through this process, growth within a community can occur as new perspectives are considered. These new perspectives can lead to change and greatly influence the final product of the team. Considering the role conflict can play in teams, the work group was required to face conflict and positively utilize the effects of conflict to drive the work of the group forward towards change.

Team Decision-Making

The work group faced many decisions. According to Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer (2002) a number of factors influence decisions. First, decisions are influenced by the individual cognition of the group members including their prior knowledge, beliefs, and experiences. Second, situation or context influences decision-making through the social interactions that occur in these spaces. Teacher collaboration exposes teachers to multiple perspectives, which ultimately influence the decision-making process. Therefore, the design of this work group took into account various factors that influence decision-making.

When individuals are gathered as a group and are required to make decisions, leaders can support the decision-making process through various actions. First, the leader can support a group in developing a shared sense of direction and purpose (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Fullan, 2008). A direction and purpose help to guide the group in figuring out what resources are needed to effectively make a decision. Leaders can also provide these resources for the group. One example of a resource that could be used by a group to make a decision is data. Well-supported data can help a group to determine what needs to change (Daggett, 2014). It can also provide feedback to inform a group about the effectiveness of a change that has been implemented. Finally, leaders can support group decision-making by stepping back, allowing others to lead and trusting the process (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Fullan, 2008). Fullan (2008) suggests that providing direction while being flexible allows for more natural interactions within the group to take place, which can lead to more organic decision-making.

Group Dynamics

A group facilitator must also consider the group processes that impact the decision-making and productivity of a group. Hammar Chiriac's scheme for understanding group processes (Hammar Chiriac, 2008) utilizes 15 metaphors to describe the dynamic processes that are found in teams. Her scheme is a combination of Steiner's theory of group processes and productivity (Steiner, 1972) and Bion's theory of the professional work group (Bion, 1961).

Table 1

Hammar Chiriac's Scheme for Understanding Group Processes (2008)

Type of activity	Work group	Dependence group	Fight group	Flight group	Pairing group
<i>Additive</i>	Tug-of-war			Stalling	
<i>Disjunctive</i>	Expert	Leader dependence	Troublemaker	Slacker	A pair of lovers
<i>Conjunctive</i>	Mountaineering		Guerrilla	Extended breaks	
<i>Compensatory</i>	Jury			Keeping piecework down	
<i>Complementary</i>	Anthology		Stoning	Coffee party	

Hammar Chiriac (2008) suggests that group dynamics are impacted by the form of emotional level in the group (work or basic-assumption) and the type of activity or task (additive, disjunctive, conjunctive, compensatory, complementary) in which the group engages (Bion, 1961; Steiner, 1972). When the emotional level and type of task are combined, a metaphor is utilized to describe the type of group process and to give the reader a mental picture of the process. As the facilitator of the work group, I was aware of the group dynamics that fluctuated throughout the study, and I paid attention to the impact they had on the learning and productivity of the group; therefore, Hammar Chiriac's framework (2008) is a productive mechanism for analyzing the results of this study.

Individual Cognition Affects the Change Process

Because any new process involves change, I also had to take into account how people change. In education, change is often initiated through policy implementation;

however, policy implementation with fidelity is difficult at the local level (Spillane et al., 2002). Spillane et al. (2002) developed a cognitive perspective on implementation to explore how individual cognition influences teachers' understanding of their practice and their ability to change.

The change process has a fundamental cognitive component that involves teachers noticing, framing, interpreting, and constructing meaning around the change initiative and their own practice (Spillane et al., 2002). This cognitive process could lead or not lead to a change in an individual's understanding and behavior. Argyris (1991) supports the idea that a key component of the change process occurs internally. He suggests that for learning to occur, an individual must look inward and critically reflect on his or her own behavior. Argyris (1991) coined this process "double-loop learning" which describes how an individual thinks or the cognitive reasoning he or she uses to design and implement actions.

The sense-making process is also greatly influenced by an individual's prior knowledge, expertise, values, beliefs and experiences (Spillane et al., 2002). Together they serve as a lens through which the teacher notices the information and then processes, encodes and interprets it. Schemas, or "knowledge structures that link together related concepts," are accessed and ultimately affect comprehension by activating collections of expectations (Spillane et al., 2002, p. 394). Schemas and teachers' prior beliefs and practices can inhibit change at times because teachers are unwilling to adapt to the policy's initiatives or because their present understanding interferes with their ability to interpret and implement the reform (Spillane et al., 2002).

When prior knowledge or experience negatively impacts an individual's willingness or ability to change, a restructuring of existing schemas or a reinterpretation of existing ways of thinking may be necessary; simply encoding new ideas may not be enough (Spillane et al., 2002). When restructuring is required, oftentimes leaders approach this dilemma by attempting to share facts or statistics with individuals to adjust their long-held beliefs rooted in personal experience; however, this does not seem to help. Statistics and accurate information do not effectively influence understanding and learning because individuals tend to embrace information that supports their belief and reject information that contradicts them (Kahneman, 2011; Kolbert, 2017). This phenomenon is known as confirmation bias. Instead, Kolbert (2017) suggests that sociability and the influence of others' ideas on an individual's beliefs seem to have a more profound impact. Kahneman (2011) suggests that individuals seem to learn best when they are surprised by individual cases or situations, which lead them to infer general information from a particular experience. This is another example of how individual cognition can influence the change process in education.

Change Occurs in a Social Context

Although individual cognition plays a major role in how people change, change does not occur in a vacuum. The situation of the individual and the context in which the change is occurring has a major impact on an individual's sense-making (Spillane et al., 2002). First, an individual's position in their environment and their formal and informal social interactions with members of an organization can shape their perception of things and ultimately influence sense-making (Spillane et al., 2002). Second, an organizational

structure that allows for consistent social interaction within the organization affects sense-making by allowing teachers to connect with peers and engage in rich deliberations about new ideas and knowledge (Spillane et al., 2002). Finally, collaborative organizational structures also increase opportunities for teachers to develop trust among school staff (Forsyth et al., 2011; Spillane et al., 2002). Collective trust is an important component of a school culture that is supportive of change (Bernhardt, 1999; Forsyth et al., 2011). Within a trusting school culture, colleagues can share personal values, beliefs and visions, and they are able to communicate and collaborate with one another to build and implement a shared vision and mission (Bernhardt, 1999). Overall, a school culture built on trust, a collaborative organizational structure, and the social interactions of an individual are some of the major contextual factors that affect the change process of organizations and individuals.

Reform Design Influences Change

As stated in the beginning of this section, much educational change is often initiated through policy implementation. According to Spillane et al. (2002), the design of policies influences sense-making; therefore, it is important to analyze the features of policy design that support change. First, the tractability of the problem the policy seeks to address and the nature of the change influence the implementation process (Spillane et al., 2002). Some policies attempt to create significant changes in present behaviors, and some policies attempt merely to tweak behavior. Change is difficult because of cognitive complexities and affective challenges; therefore, the bigger the change, the more difficult

the implementation process (Spillane et al., 2002). Individuals must consider the tractability of the problem and the nature of the change when designing reform efforts.

After designing a reform effort or policy, clear communication of deep underlying principles and the rationale of the reform is key (Spillane et al., 2002). Spillane et al. (2002) stress that it is important not to focus on a particular program or set of practices when designing reform. Instead, focusing on the underlying principles requires teachers to grapple with ideas that require fundamental conceptual changes rather than surface level changes that result in short-term change.

Finally, establishing a system to enforce a reform and support the reform efforts will help teachers to construct an interpretation of the policy and apply the interpretation to their own behavior (Sheninger & Murray, 2017; Spillane et al., 2002). Joyce and Showers (2002) described four components of a support program which include exploration of theory or rationale, demonstration or modeling of skill, practice of skill, and collaborative work of peers to solve problems or questions. These four components can support the reform effort and change process through effective staff development.

The Principles of Collaboration and Change Were Integrated into the Design

Since this study focused on designing a process that would lead to change within a school system, it was important to consider the necessary conditions within the organization that lead to successful change. The principles of collaboration and the change process were integrated in the design by taking into consideration the importance of team formation, meeting design, leadership practices, and the processes that lead to decision-making. In the next chapter, I will discuss the methods that were used in the

study to learn more about how a school counselor formed and facilitated a teacher work group that aimed to promote teacher-student relationships.

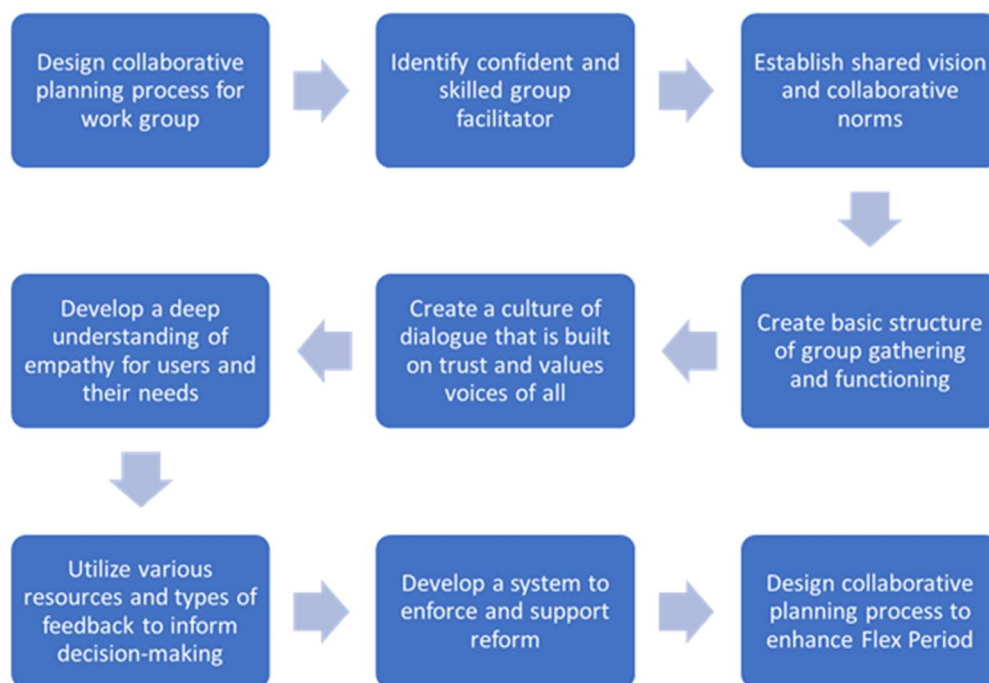
CHAPTER 4

METHODS

This study employed a design-based methodology to design and evaluate a planning process for an enhanced Flex Period. Thus, the outcome of the design process was a planning process. The purpose of the study was to ascertain if the design led to a productive planning process. I was guided by three main questions: What is the relationship between the actions of the school counselor and the formation and functioning of the work group? What is the relationship between the characteristics and behaviors of the group members and the formation and functioning of the work group? What is the impact of the proposed and emergent principles and procedures on the collaboration decision-making process?

Theory of Action

Given the continued challenges that the leadership at SCHS had encountered with the change process and the implementation of Flex Period, I developed a theory of action (Appendix A) based on the problem of poor implementation. Mintrop (2016) states that theories of action “connect the values and intentions of leaders with their understanding of problems at hand and their knowledge of effective processes of change in given social contexts” (p. 76). The causes of the problem drive the theory of action, which then provides a template for how a particular practice ought to work.

Figure 1*Simple Theory of Action*

Note. Demonstrates a process of change for designing a collaborative planning process to enhance Flex Period.

A Range of Issues Contributed to Struggles with Flex Period

There were various underlying causes that contributed to the problem of reform implementation at SCHS. I created a fishbone diagram (Appendix B) to outline these problem causes. Because Flex Period was designed with a multifaceted purpose that changed several times over the last few years, the psychology of teachers negatively impacted the implementation of Flex Period. The individual cognition of teachers includes their prior knowledge and beliefs, historical perspective and self-affirmation bias

(Spillane et al., 2002). The context of the organization can also affect implementation (Spillane et al., 2002). At SCHS, the organizational structure of the school lacked collaborative learning opportunities and a structure to support reform efforts. Also, the school culture did not embrace change. Finally, the school leadership (Fullan, 2007; Gallagher & Thordarson, 2018) and their decision-making approach (Armenakis et al., 1993; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Sheninger & Murray, 2017) contributed to the struggles with Flex Period. Because SCHS had primarily used a top-down, non-collaborative approach to decision-making, the teachers had not been able to contribute to the design and implementation of Flex Period. Their voices had not been heard, and the lack of participation in the process reduced buy-in and support for the period.

Given the range of issues that contributed to the struggles with Flex Period, a new planning process was needed before moving forward with a subsequent redesign of Flex Period for 9th grade students. By utilizing a collaborative team approach that valued dialogue and encouraged empathy for teachers and students, the hope was that the new planning process that was developed by the work group would be more inclusive and result in robust decision-making that would lead to sustainable change.

Several Change Drivers Influenced Learning

After identifying the problem and its causes, I consulted the professional knowledge base that was relevant to my design challenge. The literature helped me to identify several change drivers (Appendix C). Derived from Garmston and Wellman (2016), the primary drivers included: collaboration; meeting leadership and design; resources; and community. The first driver was collaboration. A collaborative work

group was formed, which allowed teachers to work with a common purpose while engaging in dialogue and discussion. The second driver was meeting leadership and design. Effective structures for group planning were established, and a confident, skilled group facilitator was selected to manage the energy and focus of the work group. The third driver was resources. The work group examined a variety of resources to inform their decision-making, and they established a system to support and enforce the process. Finally, the fourth driver was community. Through a network of relationships and a deep understanding of empathy for the planners and their needs, the work group developed a sense of community. Community connects individuals to each other and to important ideas and work. These four change drivers became the guiding principles that steered my design of the intervention.

The Design of the Intervention

The design of the intervention reflected the change drivers or guiding principles that are outlined in the section above. My intervention (Appendix D) included a series of sessions that guided the work group, which attempted to yield an effective planning process to enhance Flex Period. The activities in each session were attached to learning that was connected to the guiding principles. The outline of the sessions and associated activities were examples of what could occur; however, in the spirit of co-design, the meetings were generative, and the discussion topics and activities drastically changed based on the needs of the group. Some of the needs of the group were determined by engaging in a group process reflection at the end of each meeting. A plus/delta protocol was used to guide the discussion at the end of each meeting. A plus/delta protocol is a

simple method for teams to engage in reflection as an approach for continuous improvement where the group lists the things that are working and the opportunities for improvement. Based on this feedback and the work that was accomplished each meeting, I adjusted the subsequent session topics and activities to meet the needs of the group and to productively work towards our group goals and outcomes.

During the initial convenings of the work group, the group members reflected on personal experiences with Flex Period, articulated a common purpose and goals of the group and began to organize the group. The second session focused on community building, defining and selecting group roles, and understanding the challenge. The third session continued with another activity to help the group members understand the challenge while also focusing on the future of the project by determining a long-term project plan. The fourth session required our group members to define the audience. During this activity, they were encouraged to consider a broad spectrum of people who would be touched by our design in order to develop an understanding of their needs and motivations. Group members also took some time to reflect on what we had discussed over the last four sessions in regard to the challenge. The group continued to build the team by brainstorming group norms. Session five began with selecting group norms, and then the group broke up into three small groups to work on our short-term goals. Session six focused on preparing our presentation for the faculty and developing a student questionnaire. Finally, the seventh session allowed the group to finalize the questionnaire and presentation. An eighth session was added per the suggestion of the group, and this session was dedicated to reviewing the initial results of the student questionnaire. Most of

the planning was generative and evolved based on the feedback from the group members during sessions one through seven; however, the session planning was guided by the design thinking process as well as the feedback from the group members.

Setting

The data were collected from South Central High School (SCHS), a large suburban high school in Pennsylvania, beginning in March 2019. There are approximately 1,960 students in grades 9 through 12 and 125 faculty and staff members in the school. The ethnic breakdown of the student population is 3% Asian, 8% Black/African American, 6% Latino/Hispanic, 81% White/Non-Hispanic, 2% Multi-Racial, and less than 1% is other races. Approximately 30% of the population is economically disadvantaged, and there is a growing population of English learners [data from the school district]. The staff is overwhelmingly White/Non-Hispanic and predominantly female, and many teachers are graduates from the high school. I am currently a school counselor at SCHS.

Unit of Analysis: The Relationship Between the School Counselor and the Work Group

The proximal outcome of the study was to develop a research-based planning process through which the work group attempted to productively design a planning process to revise Flex Period for freshmen. The focus of the study was on the relationship between the school counselor and the work group. By focusing on my role as school counselor and group facilitator, it allowed me to gather the most information around the process of implementation.

Initially I had planned for my role to be the expert consultant for the group. I was going to be removed from the group and simply consult with the teacher leader who was going to lead and facilitate the group. However, after consulting with the school administrators as well as my dissertation chair committee members, I decided to change my role to group facilitator. This shift in role required me to play a more equal and participatory role in the group. It also created a more inclusive and comfortable environment for myself and my peers by eliminating a power dynamic that could have been present if I held the title of “expert consultant.”

My role as the school counselor and group facilitator was to form the work group and guide the content of group. To form the group, a maximum variation sampling was used during the initial step in the formation process to increase the likelihood that the findings would reflect different perspectives (Creswell, 2013). The criterion for selection in this study was gender, age, and discipline. I also considered which teachers had experience teaching Flex Period and working with 9th grade students. Their experience was necessary to inform an understanding of the needs of freshmen students and how their needs could be met during Flex Period. I hand-selected the initial group of teachers that I invited to participate in the work group. After the initial group was formed, an email was sent to the entire school inviting additional members to join. In addition to the teachers who were either invited or volunteered to participate, an administrator was also invited to participate in the work group. I invited the assistant principal who oversaw Flex Period. See Appendix E for a complete list of work group members.

The work group had a teacher leader. During the initial formation of the group, I asked for a volunteer to be designated as the teacher leader based on his or her interest in leading a group of peers. This individual managed the flow of the meetings by engaging in tasks such as assisting with the design of the meeting agendas and keeping time for the meetings. I was the group facilitator, and I worked closely with the teacher leader. I supported the teacher leader by directing the content of the meetings through activities such as doing research, planning the activities and protocols for the group, providing resources and scripting meetings and documents. I also provided her with a printed copy of the agenda so she could easily follow along with the activities and keep us on track with time. In the spirit of co-design, I worked with the teacher leader and the members of the group to design the planning process.

Data Collection Strategies

My research involved investigating the design process and assessing the design's impact. My data collection began by conducting a needs assessment to identify the problems and to guide my design. My data collection continued when the study began when I administered a questionnaire to the members of the work group. subsequently using a rubric to assess the historical planning processes of the organization. These methods produced baseline data, which were necessary to determine the teachers' initial understanding and practice for each guiding principle. During the implementation of the intervention, I observed the work group, interviewed participants and analyzed documents that were produced in order to collect impact data. Finally, I recorded memos

and utilized informal observations and interviews to capture the process of implementation. In the subsequent sections, I will explain my data collection strategies.

Needs Assessment

I started my study by conducting a needs assessment. I interviewed four teachers and one school counselor from SCHS. These educators were selected purposefully to gain a wide variety of perspectives. Each person I selected was from a different department. Three interview subjects were women and two were men. One teacher was a department head, which meant that he held a leadership position in the school. None of these individuals ended up joining the work group that was the focus of this study.

During the interviews, I inquired about the SCHS teachers' experiences with decision-making processes and reform implementation at SCHS. The interviews were informal and semi-structured, and the results showed that most decisions at SCHS occurred in a top-down format. At times, groups of teachers were consulted by the administration to receive feedback about an upcoming initiative or impending decision; however, there were few situations that used a collaborative planning process to develop and implement a school reform initiative. The information gleaned from the needs assessments helped me to identify the problems, the various underlying causes of the problem, and the actions necessary to reach the desired results. This information led to the development of the fishbone diagram (Appendix B).

In addition to interviewing teachers, I interviewed the former assistant principal who oversaw the design and implementation of Flex Period during the first year of implementation. He provided the necessary historical information about the planning

process that was used for the initial design. This information was used to aid in understanding the psychology of the teachers as well as the context of the organization.

Impact Data

During the implementation of the intervention, I collected impact data to compare the participants' beliefs, attitudes, and practices at the beginning and end of the study (Mintrop, 2016). Ultimately, my intervention was about how I formed and facilitated a work group that was tasked with designing a process to revise Flex Period. Therefore, I collected data on my role as the school counselor group facilitator as well as the process of producing a quality plan. I used a questionnaire, rubric, observations, interviews, document analysis, and a reflective journal to collect the impact data.

First, I administered a questionnaire at the beginning of the intervention (Appendix F). A questionnaire is a quick, efficient way to gather information from a group of people. I used this information to determine a baseline assessment of the teachers' understanding and practice for each guiding principle. The baseline assessment also helped to corroborate whether the results of the needs assessments were correct (Mintrop, 2016). Initially I had planned to administer the questionnaire again at the end of the intervention to assess changes in their understanding and practice, but I realized it would be difficult to fully capture their insights without some discussion and reflection about the guiding principles and their experience in the work group. Instead, during our seventh meeting, I shared with the group the baseline information that was gathered from the questionnaire results. I then asked them to reflect on their experience in our work group compared to their experience in other collaborative settings in our school. After

reflecting, they individually listed on an index card the collaborative practices that were the same and the collaborative practices that were different based on their experience in both settings. They also listed the collaborative practices that they would like to continue using in the future. This exercise allowed me to assess their current understanding and practice of the guiding principles as well as their future plans to incorporate the guiding principles in other settings.

In addition to the questionnaire, I used a rubric based on the guiding principles to assess the historical planning processes of the organization (Appendix G). The results of the rubric served as a baseline assessment of the type of work that was being done within the current planning processes that existed within the organization. I used this rubric again at the end of the implementation of the intervention to evaluate the components of the process that were produced by the work group.

Data collection strategies for impact data also included observing the work group, interviewing individuals in the group, and analyzing documents produced by the group. I intended to use observation tools to describe the behaviors of the members of the work group including their actions, interactions, and responses; however, it proved to be difficult to write observations while I was facilitating the work group. I used interviews to obtain detailed information about the group members' thinking, understanding, and perceptions of the guiding principles, and I used a rubric based on the guiding principles to analyze documents and evaluate the components of the planning process. The tools used during these data collection approaches clearly defined relevant competencies,

practices and performances so that parameters did not change throughout the duration of the intervention (Mintrop, 2016).

Finally, I kept a reflective journal to document my observations of the process, descriptions of what was accomplished, reflections on group interactions, and my role as the school counselor group facilitator. The purpose of collecting these data was to observe myself as a leader and to learn more about how to approach a leadership role that aims to lead change within this context. Also, to more fully understand my experience, I had a critical friend interview me. A critical friend is a trusted person who provides feedback to an individual through use of provocative questions and critique of a person's work as a way to support the success of that work (Costa & Kallick, 1993). Halfway through the study, my critical friend asked me questions that helped me to analyze my facilitation skills and my responses to the group experience.

Process Data

In addition to collecting impact data, I also collected process data. Process data helps us understand the impact by capturing the process of implementation of the intervention (Mintrop, 2016). My study primarily focused on the process of implementation. The qualitative data collection approaches that were used to capture the process were informal conversations and observations. Also, as the researcher, I wrote a reflective journal entry after each session of the intervention to keep track of any insights and reflections about how the intervention was being implemented. During meetings, I audio recorded six out of eight sessions. The audio helped me to reflect on my actions as the facilitator as well as the behaviors and responses of the group members throughout

the process. I also used the final interview of each work group member to obtain detailed information about the group members' perceptions of the process.

At the end of the study, I engaged in a reflective exercise. I looked over all the artifacts that I generated over the course of the eight work group sessions. After being somewhat removed from the process, I noted how I felt in the beginning of the group formation process, and I described how I felt at the end of the process. This reflective exercise allowed me to describe how I had changed as a school counselor leader and how my perspective on the change process had shifted. I was also able to think more holistically about themes that emerged within my experience as a group facilitator.

Data Analysis

The analysis of impact data followed specific procedures to establish baseline and outcome assessments of the teachers' experience in designing a collaborative planning process (Mintrop, 2016). These assessments were compared to determine the extent to which the teachers incorporated the guiding principles into their design after participating in the intervention sessions. The data from the questionnaires was analyzed as one aspect of the baseline and outcome assessment of the teachers' practice. For this analysis, items associated with guiding principles and how the teachers incorporated them into the development of the planning process were analyzed to identify differences in pre- and post-responses. Also, a rubric based on the guiding principles was used to assess the final planning process that was created by the work group.

Data analysis on design process data followed Creswell's (2013) steps of data analysis: organizing the data; reading and memoing; describing, classifying, and

interpreting data into codes and themes; interpreting the data; and representing and visualizing the data. These steps are interconnected, and they ultimately help the researcher to determine if the intervention produced the desired change for the individuals who participated in the process (Mintrop, 2016).

After a holistic review of the data, I identified key moments that occurred during the group formation and during meetings. I created data displays to organize this data. Data displays are visual outlines for the data or findings to be displayed (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020). Analyzing the data displays allowed me to identify themes, and the key moments exemplified the themes.

Following the holistic review and organization of the data, I coded the data that was collected. Coding is the process of organizing data into themes and categories (Creswell, 2014). I used a combination of predetermined, or *a priori* codes, and emerging, or *in vivo*, codes. *A priori* codes were determined based on the results of the needs assessment and the literature and theory that relates to the topic of the study.

During the needs assessment, many teachers described the features of past leadership, committee meetings and group interactions that influenced the change process and their emotional experience. Because these themes were identified from the needs assessment, I reviewed the literature on teams and the change process. The key topics in the literature that were most closely related to my research questions were selected as my *a priori* codes. The *a priori* codes that I used fell into three categories: counselor, meeting logistics, and context of interactions. The *a priori* codes were (1) facilitation guidance (2) expertise (3) response to group experience (4) vision setting (5) process

negotiation (6) decision-making (7) empathy (8) trust, and (9) emotion. Some of these codes were assigned to the data using a qualitative computer data analysis program called Dedoose.

When I engaged in first cycle coding, I used descriptive, *in vivo*, process, concept and emotion codes. New codes emerged as I was doing my analysis. According to Creswell (2014), *in vivo* codes emerge from the information collected from the participants. After the first cycle coding, I had too many codes to form meaningful themes, so I discarded some codes and engaged in second cycle coding to group initial summaries into a smaller number of themes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020). My second cycle codes fell into five categories: counselor action, counselor experience, group member action: interpersonal interactions, group member action: meeting communication, group member characteristics, and group member experience. Some examples of codes include relationship building, empathizing, dialoguing, and decision making. See Appendix H for a complete list of codes. During the second cycle coding, my themes shifted based on my coding, and I was able to make an interpretation of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

Before the study began, participants were given an informed consent form (Appendix I) that informed them that their participation was voluntary and described the purpose of the study. Their rights to privacy were outlined, and reassurance that their employment status would not be impacted by their participation in the study was provided. My role as the researcher and the intended use of the results were outlined to

ensure the participants that their participation would not serve as an evaluation tool of any sort and the results would not be shared with administration as a form of evaluation of their teaching ability. Patton (2015) points out that the task of the researcher is to gather data (as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016); therefore, it was not my role to judge the participants and their ability based on their participation in the intervention.

Another ethical consideration that is important to note was my relationship with the participants. I am a colleague of the participants in the study. I am a school counselor, and they are teachers at the same high school. Although our roles within the school are different, we are peers. We also collaborate often when working with students, and we discuss educational processes on a regular basis. My professional relationship with the participants could have impacted the outcomes of the study.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note that in qualitative research, conducting a study in an ethical manner helps to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. Ethical considerations for this study have been noted above. In order to increase the credibility of the study, I triangulated different data sources by examining evidence from a variety of sources of data and perspectives from participants. Also, maximum variation sampling was used to account for different perspectives and experiences among the participants. While analyzing the data, I frequently talked with my dissertation chair to discuss the data. During our discussions he asked me questions that allowed me to think about the data differently. He reviewed my data tables and findings and gave me feedback. Throughout this process, he acted as an auditor which also enhances the trustworthiness

of the study. Following data analysis, member checks is another strategy that is suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). This strategy also was used to solicit feedback on the preliminary findings: I gathered feedback from some of participants to determine if the interpretation was accurate.

Self-reflection was a critical strategy that was used in this study that can produce a certain amount of credibility and trustworthiness because it demonstrates to the reader that the researcher attempted to continuously self-critique and to explain how his or her own experiences did or did not influence the research process (Creswell, 2014). Self-reflection was used throughout the study, but the self-reflection process began by writing a positionality statement. Writing the positionality statement before the study allowed me to bracket my experiences before data collection and data analysis, which was necessary to allow me to view the results from a fresh perspective, acknowledging my biases and suspending my understandings and assumptions.

Positionality Statement

This research is based in South Central High School (SCHS), and it seeks to design a planning process for initiating change related to teacher-student relationships. I am a school counselor at SCHS, and I have been involved in building-level change initiatives in the past. I have been discouraged when initiatives failed, and I want to learn more about how to design an improved process. Also, I work directly with the teachers and students in SCHS who all share their experiences with teacher-student relationships with me. I know first-hand the importance that TSRs play in the lives of students, and I often attempt to support teachers on how to develop stronger relationships with students.

As a school counselor, my profession is built on relationships. I value relationships with students, and I put time and effort into cultivating caring, trusting relationships with students. Additionally, I have relationships with the teachers at SCHS. Some relationships are personal, and some are professional. I also see the value in developing collegial relationships. My position and role as a school counselor at SCHS may have an impact on the results of the study because I am also the researcher in the study. The dual role that I play could impact my practices, view of the group processes, or the guiding principles that steer the design of the planning process. My emotional ties to the topic, people and setting of this study could impact the outcomes of the study. Knowing this, I will use self-reflection and bracketing throughout the study to attempt to suspend my assumptions and understandings and view the results from a fresh perspective.

Effective Planning Processes Can Transform the Learning Experience of All Students

The purpose of this study was to discover a combination of leadership characteristics and behaviors, materials, organizational structures and activities that would encourage a process of learning for those who were involved in the study. The learning focused on the development of a deep understanding of the guiding principles that were required to design an effective planning process that attempted to yield a high-quality outcome for the school.

Although the context of the design and the design challenge were specific to South Central High School, this study can be meaningful to all who encounter it. Educational leaders and teachers are responsible for designing school processes that

result in transformational, sustainable change. Without an effective planning process, organizations may resort to making decisions in a top-down fashion. When this occurs, effective change is unlikely to occur. The hope is that those who encounter this study can see themselves in it and apply the design principles that emerge to intentionally design our schools and transform the student learning experience in a way that better prepares our students to become successful citizens in a global society.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Process Data

Throughout this project, I looked at the process of how a school counselor forms and facilitates a teacher work group. In order to do this, I collected process data by using various qualitative data collection approaches such as interviews, informal conversations, observations and reflective journal entries to capture the process of implementation of the intervention. These methods gave me insights into the thoughts and perceptions of the group members as well as myself as they related to how the work group was formed and facilitated.

Impact Data

In addition to looking at the process of forming and facilitating a teacher work group, I also looked at the outcomes of the work group itself. By analyzing the final interviews of participants as well as the results of the questionnaire and rubric, I determined the impact that the intervention had on some of the participants' beliefs, attitudes, and practices as they related to collaborative teacher work groups.

Results of the Questionnaire Provided Insights into the Participants' Understanding and Practice of the Guiding Principles

During the first meeting of the work group, I distributed a questionnaire to all participants. The results of the questionnaire were used to determine a baseline assessment of the teachers' understanding and practice for each guiding principle. Ten

participants responded to the questionnaire. Because the respondent number was small and the instrument has not been validated, reporting specific percentages would misstate the accuracy of the instrument; therefore, the results are not conclusive. Instead, I will summarize some of the main themes that emerged from the results. The themes are as follows:

- Most people felt that collaborative practices used to solve problems and brainstorm innovative ideas were rarely used in our school.
- Few people felt that collaborative teams developed and posted norms of interactions.
- Most teachers identified that there were few opportunities for teachers across grade levels and departments to be involved in decision-making.
- All but one teacher felt that the school lacked systems for assessing and supporting group work.
- Few teachers felt that teams established trust among team members.

These results gave me an overall understanding of the teachers' experiences with the practice of each guiding principle. It also gave me insight into the practices and procedures to implement throughout the planning process.

As a follow up to the initial questionnaire, we engaged in discussion and reflection during the seventh meeting about the guiding principles and the participants' experiences in the work group. The participants listed the collaborative practices that were new to them, and they noted the collaborative practices that they would like to continue using in the future. The practices they noted were (a) using pre-advertised

agendas with clear goals and timeframes, (b) enacting group norms, (c) engaging in group reflection and regular feedback, (d) building relationships with others, (e) communicating openly, and (f) participating in a grassroots approach to problem-solving. This exercise allowed me to assess the participants' newfound understanding and practice of the guiding principles as well as their future plans to incorporate the guiding principles in other settings.

Results of the Rubric Suggested Growth in the Areas of Collaboration and Community

Prior to the study, I used a rubric based on the guiding principles to assess the historical planning processes of the organization. The results of the rubric served as a baseline assessment of the type of work that was being done within the current planning processes that existed within the organization. I used this rubric again at the end of the implementation of the intervention to evaluate the components of the process that were produced by the work group.

I was the only one who completed the rubric, and the instrument has not been validated; therefore, reporting specific percentages would misrepresent the accuracy of the instrument. In turn, the results were not conclusive; however, I will summarize some of the main insights that were gleaned from the results.

When comparing the results from the pre- and post-rubrics, the largest gains were made in the areas of collaboration and community. In collaboration, the practices of diverse involvement in planning and decision-making, the development of group norms, purposeful facilitation that employs protocols to guide dialogue, and the consistent

preparation of agendas in advance were notably improved. In community, the presence of trust, respect, open communication, and empathy all increased.

These results helped to evaluate the components of the process that were produced by the work group. As stated previously, these results and insights were generated solely by myself since I was the only one who completed the rubric. In order to critically examine possible biases that I may have had, I shared my insights with other members of the group and asked them to comment on the results.

Structures and Processes of the Work Group

Both the impact and process data were important to understanding the findings and learning more about how a school counselor forms and facilitates a teacher work group. Now I am going to describe the structures and processes involved with this project in order to present a clear picture of the sequence of events from beginning to end. I will begin by describing the initial planning stages of the work group, and then I will explain the events that took place during the formation of the group as well as the functioning of the group. After that, I will discuss the main themes that emerged from the data.

Genesis of the Project

New Approach to Planning Designed to Support Major Changes to Flex Period

Flex Period was not effectively addressing the needs of 9th grade students as they transitioned to high school; however, I realized that addressing this problem would ultimately result in significant changes to Flex Period. Any change to Flex Period would impact a large number of students and teachers, so I felt strongly that I needed to include a diverse group of stakeholders in the planning process. After collaborating with one

assistant principal during the initial planning stages, I formed a work group of teachers to address the problem. We planned to meet for seven sessions after school to design a planning process that would eventually lead to an enhanced Flex Period. Before moving forward with the process, I took many steps to carefully plan, form and facilitate the group.

Needs Assessment Identified Current Approaches

During the initial planning stage, I decided to conduct a needs assessment to better understand the change process and how decisions were made at SCHS. I talked with four teachers, one school counselor, and a former assistant principal to learn more about the past and current structures that have influenced change at SCHS. I wanted to keep this information in mind when designing the group process and forming the group. The results of the needs assessment revealed that a recent experience with change in the structure of the school schedule had a significant impact on teachers' perspectives on collaborative work groups and the change process. Most of their views of collaborative work groups were negative, which contributed to a cynicism toward change.

Permission of Administrators Was Needed

After realizing that change would be difficult, I knew that I would need the support of my administrators to successfully address the problem of Flex Period. I met with my assistant principal, Chris³, who was in charge of Flex Period to share my ideas with him. I wanted to be transparent and maintain open and honest communication with him about my purpose, mission, and vision for the formation and facilitation of the work

³ This participant's name and all other names are pseudonyms.

group. I hoped to get his feedback on my ideas while also gaining his support for the initiative. I listened to his feedback and made adjustments to the plan. Through this process of dialogue and discussion, trust grew, and I felt supported in this endeavor. We built a strong working relationship. Chris became invested in the work group and the mission, and he agreed to participate in the group.

Counselor Decided to Form and Facilitate a Work Group

With Chris's support, I decided to form a work group. Before attempting to recruit teachers to join the work group, I wanted to determine who would lead the group. Initially I had planned on being an expert consultant for the group who would observe from the outside and consult with the group facilitator to help plan the meetings. After talking with several experts on group facilitation and reading the literature on facilitating collaborative work groups, I decided to change my role in the group to group facilitator and participant. This change reduced some of my worries because I was very worried about how the group members would perceive my role as an outside observer and expert consultant. I thought they might feel uncomfortable and question my investment in the group if I only observed the group and worked behind the scenes. I wanted to be viewed as a peer and equal participant in the planning process. The change could have contributed to the success of the group because it helped the group members feel comfortable with me leading the group, which led to open and honest conversations about the group process.

Counselor Planned Communication With Faculty

The final step in the initial planning stage for the work group involved communication to the faculty to set the stage for the group formation. I was cognizant of the faculty's cynicism of change. Because of this, I asked Chris if an administrator would be willing to send an email to the faculty with information about the upcoming project. I wanted to be as transparent as possible with the faculty, and I wanted to demonstrate that I had the support of the administration for this endeavor. My goal was for the communication to be informative without causing unnecessary angst. I drafted a short paragraph about the project and provided this to the administrators to review and utilize for the email. The paragraph attempted to pique the faculty's interest about the topic of the project while allowing them to begin to think about their potential participation in the group. Because the email was ultimately sent by our principal, I felt his communication gave some legitimacy to the project and showed support for me as the group facilitator.

Group Formation

Counselor Invited Diverse Group of Teachers to Participate

As a school counselor who had never led a work group of teachers before, the group formation caused me the most anxiety. I was concerned that teachers would not view me as a suitable group facilitator who had the necessary knowledge and skills to lead a group like this. My anxiety was also high because teacher work groups were not common at SCHS, and I would be asking the teachers to meet after school hours on their own time. All of these factors combined with their cynicism of change led me to believe that I was going to have great difficulty forming this group. Despite my fears, I invited a

small group of teachers with a variety of experiences, backgrounds and personalities to join the group. I drafted an email to send to the teachers which included information about the group as well as a personal note for each individual that highlighted why I thought they would be a valuable member of the group. To my surprise, seven out of the nine individuals who received my email agreed to join the work group. I was elated!

Four Additional Faculty Members Requested to Join

After I knew that forming a group was possible, I drafted an email to send to the entire faculty. I wanted to be transparent by providing them with information about the project and work group. I also wanted to be welcoming and inclusive by inviting others to participate in some way. I sent the email to Chris to forward to the school, and again I was surprised when three additional teachers and one school counselor requested to join the work group. In addition to me, the total group membership included ten teachers, one school counselor, and one administrator bringing the total to 13 members. I was very surprised that more teachers were interested in the topic and willing to commit to after-school meetings. My *a priori* optimal number of work group members was between five and seven; therefore, recruiting twelve members was greater than my initial number. This was exciting yet nerve-racking. I was hopeful that I could manage a group of twelve individuals. After the first meeting there was some attrition. Two group members decided to drop out of the group due to personal reasons, which reduced our number to ten participants.

Agendas Were Designed with an Intentional Process in Mind

Once the group was formed, I began to plan our meetings. I started by creating a list of topics that would be covered in the seven planned meetings. This gave me a starting point when designing the agendas for each meeting. Each agenda design was influenced by design thinking, the group goals, and teacher feedback. I wanted to design the agendas with an intentional process in mind, so design thinking provided the framework for this process. The group goals helped me to determine our work for each meeting, and teacher feedback helped me to refine the group process each week to ensure that our process was meeting the needs of the group and supporting our productivity. I wanted to be flexible and allow the group to contribute to the direction of the meetings. The planning resulted in eight agendas that were developed over the course of the 11 weeks that the group met (Appendix J and Appendix K). Once I designed each agenda, I created an outline to help me think through the main points that I wanted to share with the group, and I also created a PowerPoint to provide visuals during the meetings.

When interviewed, each participant found the thorough planning and preparation for each meeting helpful. One group participant, Bret, said that the agendas provided a clear mission and goals for the group. The agendas not only kept the group on task and focused on the goals, but it also increased investment in the process. He stated, “By running a better prepared meeting than I could’ve envisioned, everybody is invested in the process. Everyone has an element of buy-in to it. We see the purpose. There was transparency. It wasn’t a meeting just to say that we’re meeting.” The consistency with the meeting structure was also seen as a positive. Chris and Lillian talked about the

routine nature of the meetings being appreciated because they always knew what to expect and when they had an opportunity to share during the meetings.

Group Organization Process Began With Conflict

In addition to securing group members and designing agendas, the group formation stage also included establishing the processes, procedures and protocols for the work group. These steps occurred throughout the eight group meetings. To begin this process, I asked the group during our first meeting to list some topics that we would need to discuss to organize ourselves as a group. After listening to their suggestions, I also added to the list by suggesting a discussion on group norms. Catherine, one of the teachers in the group, shared that she did not feel that a discussion on group norms was necessary because we are all professionals who will respect each other. I listened to her opinion and noted her resistance to establishing group norms. Other group members nodded in agreement as well. I realized that some teachers who had participated in work groups before may not be accustomed to certain group processes that could benefit the functioning of a group. Since I did not want to intensify the conflict early in our group process, I decided to revisit group norms at a later time and start with a more widely accepted protocol.

Group Roles Were Established to Promote a Spirit of Shared Leadership

During meeting #2 we established roles within our group. I described the roles of group facilitator, teacher leader, note taker and process checker, and I asked for volunteers to take the last three roles. I thanked all participants who volunteered. Catherine volunteered to be the teacher leader, and Nora volunteered to be the note taker.

No one volunteered to be the process checker, so I offered to lead the plus/delta reflection activity each week. Establishing these roles gave me the opportunity to share the leadership with other members of the group and to set the tone for group members to feel comfortable taking on leadership responsibilities.

When interviewed, five participants talked about group members who took on leadership roles within the group. Mary, a science teacher, noted that the roles were good and they “make sure that other people are helping out and hold the group accountable.” Nora took on the role of note taker, and she talked about her experience in this role. She said that she saw the value in documenting our discussions and actions, and she knew the role was important. She thought that by volunteering for this role the other group members might have viewed her as a “team player,” contributing to the collaborative spirit of the group. Four participants talked about group members who emerged as group leaders and took on roles that were not predetermined. I will discuss emergent leadership later when I focus on the group functioning stage of the process.

Resistance to Establishing Group Norms Faded After Collaborating with the Teacher Leader

By meeting #3 I felt we were ready to discuss group norms again. Catherine, who had voiced concerns about this procedure, was the teacher who had volunteered to be our teacher leader in the group, so I decided to approach the topic of group norms with her again. I sent her the agenda that listed the group norms protocol, and I explained the protocol and rationale for establishing group norms. She said that she liked the group norms protocol that involved individual reflection rather than full group discussion, and

she supported the idea of including this on the agenda for our group. Through shared leadership and collaboration on the agenda planning, Catherine and the other participants shared that they came to embrace the structure of the meetings and see the value in taking steps to organize our group so we could maintain the health of our group and work more efficiently.

Group Reflection Led to Changes in the Group Process

Finally, another protocol that was implemented across all eight meetings to support the health of our group was group reflection. To introduce this concept, I explained the importance of monitoring our group process. I modeled how to use the plus/delta chart, and I explained that the chart would focus our discussion on the group processes that worked and the processes that should be changed to improve the functioning of our group. I valued their opinion, so I hoped that by following through and making changes, their trust in me would grow.

During each meeting, group members took turns sharing pluses and deltas. An example of how their feedback impacted the group process took place during the first meeting. Catherine shared a delta which was “Sitting and staring during conversation.” Based on this feedback, I intentionally designed an agenda for meeting #2 that incorporated a protocol that occurred in a small group format to facilitate discussion, reduce silent moments and increase the comfort level of teachers during dialogue. By allowing for reflection, I was able to better meet the needs of our group while improving our efficiency.

Group Functioning

Over the course of three months, the work group met eight times. During this time, a number of participants attended each meeting which ranged from six attendees to twelve attendees. There are a number of key moments that impacted the functioning of the group.

Table 2

Key Moments of Group Functioning

Key Moment	Meeting Number	Meeting Date	Participants Involved
Conflict with 9th grade transition program created tension and worry	1	3/26/19	Elaine
Group member expressed concern about being open and honest when administrator was present	1	3/26/19	Chris Laryn
Group goals emerged during the planning process	3	4/16/19	Catherine Lillian Chris
Group was concerned about how faculty would receive their work	5-7	5/7/19 5/21/19 5/28/19	All participants
Teacher voluntarily completed extra work	6	5/21/19	Trent
Participants decided to add an extra meeting	7	5/28/19	Bret

I selected these key moments after considering several factors: the prevalence of the event, the degree of emotional intensity of the event, the impact the event had on the group process and dynamics, and the relevance of the event to the literature. After considering these factors, I discussed all key moments with my dissertation chair who

was acting as my auditor throughout the data analysis process. His expertise, questions, and comments during our discussion helped me to determine the importance of these key moments. I will describe these moments in detail to illustrate the integral happenings that occurred over the course of the study.

Conflict With 9th Grade Transition Program Created Tension and Worry

When I formed the work group, I suspected we would encounter some conflict within the group since this is typical in most groups; however, I did not anticipate that conflict would occur between our group and another teacher group in the school. As I explained above, the principal sent an email to the whole faculty to describe the project. This was an attempt to be transparent and to let everyone know what we were doing. The email also invited other teachers to join the group because I wanted to be welcoming and inclusive to others who wanted to participate in some way. Even though this email was sent with positive intentions, I received instant negative feedback from a group of teachers, the Link Crew coordinators, who oversaw Link Crew. Link Crew is a student leadership program that trains selected juniors and seniors to become mentors to the 9th grade students. Because this program traditionally had been the only program in the school that had focused on 9th grade transition, they were upset when they saw that I was forming a group that also planned on supporting 9th graders as they transitioned to the high school. They thought that my group was intending to take over their group, and they became defensive.

The Link Crew coordinators approached Chris and Cal to voice their concerns, and they talked with other teachers to express their frustrations. They also emailed me to

share their mission and the activities that are involved in the program, but they were very clear that they would not be willing to attend our meetings. I responded to their email and attempted to reiterate our mission while suggesting that we could work together to support our 9th grade students.

I thought that open communication would help the conflict to subside, but during our first meeting, one of our activities attempted to answer the question, “Who are we as a group?” During the dialogue, Elaine hesitantly brought up the need to discuss our relationship with Link Crew. She wondered if we were the same as Link Crew or different. She also noted that some teachers were talking about our group, and several teachers felt like we were stepping on their toes by tackling the same issue that Link Crew targets. During this discussion, there was tension in the group and other teachers appeared to be worried. In my reflection log, I wrote:

This was a tense part of the meeting. I could tell that teachers felt uncomfortable with our role versus Link Crew. I think they are looking for ways that we can co-exist and include them without hurting their feelings. I shared that some of them may be joining our group next week, or we might find a time to talk with them to get their ideas on ways we can coordinate with their program. I think it was good to discuss this now to put their minds at ease that there is no intent to create direct conflict with the other group. I did not anticipate this conflict, but it occurred.

As the group facilitator, I immediately attempted to calm their worries. I explained that our intention was not to compete with them or replace them. Chris also jumped in to support me on this topic which I greatly appreciated. Although I did not anticipate this conflict, I was glad that the group members felt comfortable enough to discuss it openly so we could address the conflict directly.

The dialogue about our identity and conflict with Link Crew created an atmosphere that encouraged open and honest communication. Even though Elaine appeared hesitant at first to discuss the conflict with Link Crew, many other participants joined in after she started the conversation. They shared their emotions and thoughts surrounding the conflict with our group. When interviewed, five participants noted the open and honest communication in the group which was present throughout our eight meetings. Nora said, "I think everybody was open and willing to listen to one another." Chris also noted the open communication, but he felt that it gradually became more natural as time progressed. Chris explained, "There was definitely the willingness right away to jump in, talk, share. I think in every meeting there was that opportunity, but I think as time went on it was a quicker start to that shared communication." Cal attributed some of the open communication to the tone that was set by my leadership. He said:

We had leadership throughout this, and people, I think, felt valued...I think when you set that tone, people feel comfortable sharing even though they're going to disagree. They feel comfortable sharing. They feel confident their opinion is going to be heard, even if it turns out to be wrong, they're comfortable with that sharing process.

Open and honest communication was valued by all group members, and it contributed to the success of the group.

Group Member Expressed Concern About Being Open and Honest When Administrator Was Present

Although much of our communication during meeting #1 was open and honest, some group members were not as vocal during the first half of the meeting when Chris was present. Chris had to leave early during the first meeting due to another obligation,

so he left after the discussion about Link Crew. After he left, we talked about what we would need to do to organize ourselves as a group. During our discussion, Laryn started to make a comment, and she prefaced her comment by stating that she would only say it now that the administrator had left the room. Several group members laughed at her statement and said that censoring our comments in front of administrators would not support the growth of trust and honest communication in our group. She said she understood, but her historical experience with administration during past change initiatives left her feeling uncomfortable communicating openly and honestly in front of them. I acknowledged her concerns, but I emphasized the importance of open and honest dialogue in order to foster trust within our group. I suggested developing group norms to help establish behaviors that would support the group's functioning and productivity.

Laryn discontinued her participation in the group after the first meeting. Although she said that she felt "very comfortable" in the group and "it was actually nice to see some people that you haven't seen in a while," she decided not to return to the group. She said that her discontinuation was "purely personal" following a disappointment when she was not offered the position of department head by our administrators. She said that she could not handle being a member in the group after receiving the upsetting news. Although her decision to quit the group seemed situational, the comments she made in the group demonstrated her lack of trust in our administrators.

When interviewed, two other group members described apprehension about communicating openly and honestly in front of an administrator. Cal said, "People are reticent, including myself, and as you know, I'm pretty vocal about stuff and always have

been. But I'm even reticent when I offer up information sometimes because I don't know where [Chris's] head is and where he wants to go with stuff." He feels that having an administrator in the group "stifles a little bit of conversation," but he still feels that an administrator's presence is valuable because he or she can provide information from a different lens, which makes him or her a valuable member of the team.

When interviewed, Trent described past experiences with administrators that were negative. These experiences discouraged him from approaching administrators "out of fear." He said that joining a group that included an administrator was "a hurdle" for him, but in the end, he appreciated the experience. He said, "And so this ability to sit down in a small group and have those more social interactions with them made it a little bit easier to step forward [as a leader]." His comfort level with working with administrators increased, and his trust in them grew as well.

The feedback that I received about apprehension with the presence of an administrator was not shared until late in the process. With few meetings left, I did not adjust Chris's participation in the meetings. Although I knew that the participants' comfort level was low with the presence of an administrator, I also hated to reduce his participation because they also emphasized the importance of his involvement in the planning process. This was made clear during meeting #5 when group members decided to include regular communication with administration as a group norm.

Group Goals Emerged During the Planning Process

During meetings #2 and #3, we focused on organizing our group, analyzing the problem, and understanding the challenge. After much dialogue about the challenge, we

ended meeting #3 by creating a project plan. I developed a draft of the project plan for our design challenge based on design thinking, and I incorporated ideas from our group based on our initial discussion about the project timeline during meeting #1. I thought that incorporating their ideas into the draft would let the group members know that I was listening to their ideas and I valued their input. I decided to start with an outline of the project plan because it would give us a starting point for discussion.

During the discussion of our project plan, the group organically developed and agreed upon three short-term goals for our group, which included designing and distributing a student questionnaire, creating a presentation for the faculty, and preparing our research for next year. After the discussion, I listened to the feedback of the group and confirmed with them that they had developed and agreed upon these three short-term goals. I adjusted the project plan to reflect these goals even though I was hesitant to tackle these three goals with only four meetings left. Moving forward, I supported the group's decision, and I designed the upcoming meeting agendas accordingly to ensure that we would achieve our goals.

The group discussion that centered around the project plan allowed our group to collaboratively develop short-term goals that were important to them. The development of the short-term goals energized our group and focused our work on creating tangible outcomes. This step was very important to the forward momentum of our group because several members expressed frustration with the slow pace of the group. Bret explained, "I'm impulsive, and I don't always [reflect] or [go] through the process that you're going through, and most times it's to my detriment that I don't do this process, so it really has

made me reflect, but speaking for myself, it's kind of almost getting antsy, that I want to start tackling the project...I'm eager to begin tackling the research, and the actual end product." I could sense the frustration in his voice as he was describing this to me. He wanted to feel like we had accomplished more than just organizing our group, analyzing the problem and understanding the problem from all perspectives of various audiences. Although he found these steps valuable, he was ready to tackle some of the short-term goals that we developed as a group that would lead to more tangible outcomes.

Cal was in agreement with Bret. He explained, "I enjoy just getting to work and moving through it." He felt the process of organizing the group and analyzing the problem and challenge slowed the momentum of the group, but he still found value in the group process. He explained:

I don't look at it in a negative way...I know there's value in it. And I don't think it's a waste of time. I think it is valuable time. It is probably more valuable in the first month or two months of a group. Of our group specifically, I know everybody there, but I don't know them personally...I think that's helpful to get to understand their nuances and things like that...It's just that wrapping my mindset, me personally, wrapping my mindset around that each time...so I can effectively engage.

After forming the short-term goals and hearing this feedback, each time I designed an agenda, I made sure that we focused on accomplishing these goals.

The flexibility of the project plan and my willingness to allow them to direct the planning process gave them a voice in the decision-making process and energized our group. Catherine confirmed this when she said, "The implementation of those changes lets us know that we are heard, so then everybody is more encouraged to speak." Cal also said, "I think people feel heard. They feel that they are able to give input. I think they feel

their input's valued and it's not just falling on deaf ears." By giving the group members a voice in the process, they felt valued, and this had an overall positive impact on the process as well as the outcomes of the group.

Group Was Concerned About How Faculty Would Receive Their Work

As we moved into meetings #5, #6, and #7, we spent the majority of our time focusing on two of the three short-term goals: creating a presentation for the faculty and designing and distributing a student questionnaire. We focused on the faculty presentation first, and there was intense dialogue about how to represent ourselves to the faculty and how to present our work in a way that would not create unnecessary angst about change. We were all aware that our faculty often had a negative reaction to change because of past experiences, so we wanted to be mindful of how we would introduce our group and present our work.

During the group discussions, I listened to the concerns and needs of our group. During meetings #6 and #7, five different group members discussed ways we could present certain topics to the faculty that would reduce their anxiety and support their buy-in for the initiative. For example, Catherine talked about using terms that were "less scary sounding" such as using the term "small discussion group" instead of "focus group." Lillian also suggested "keeping [the presentation] kind of tongue-in-cheek" and "casual" so we did not create fear. The group attempted to do this by representing each group member using a bitmoji. During meeting #7, Trent also suggested that we clearly label the project plan to indicate that certain changes would only occur "if needed." He said we should be clear that "Nothing is set in stone." In the end, we decided to design a

presentation that was light-hearted and non-threatening. We also wanted our message to be open, inclusive and welcoming for new members to join in the future.

As a result of this discussion, our group became more empathetic to all audiences who would be impacted by the formation of our group and the development of our design. We became very aware of how we would represent ourselves and share our mission and our work with the larger school community. When interviewed, Mary and Bret both talked about empathizing with our faculty members and being aware of their cynicism of change. They both mentioned the importance of being transparent and sharing our work openly to reduce their anxiety about potential changes that are to come. Mary explained, “Change is always uncomfortable...But I think I’ve always felt most comfortable when I had good information to begin with and I had support in place.” She acknowledged that change is not easy, and she used her experience to make suggestions for our presentation that demonstrated empathy for our colleagues. Bret referenced an activity that we did to define our audience and consider how our project would impact many different groups of people, and he thought that this activity resulted in a “healthy outcome” that made us realize that some people are really “reticent by change.” He noted that this realization encouraged us to tweak “the way we talk about the project” in order to reduce the anxiety of our colleagues around the idea of change. Empathy for our fellow colleagues became apparent throughout the duration of the study.

Teacher Voluntarily Completed Extra Work

At the end of meeting #5, we divided into small groups. Each group selected one of the short-term goals to address, but we did not have a very long time to work in small

groups because of dialogue about the faculty presentation that took longer than expected. Each group only had approximately ten to fifteen minutes to work together. Trent and Elaine volunteered to start creating questions for the student questionnaire. I knew that they did not have much time to work together, so I included time for small group work in our next meeting's agenda. I did not request that they do work outside of the group meetings because I was very sensitive to their busy schedules, but I secretly hoped that they might collaborate outside of the meeting to form a plan so we could move forward faster. I was worried about reaching our goals with only three meetings left.

During meeting #6, we transitioned to working in small groups halfway through the meeting. I announced that Trent and Elaine had started working on the questionnaire last meeting, and then Trent spoke up and said, "Yes. And in fact, what would help is some feedback. So, I created a document, if you want to actually pull it up, I can show you what I'm doing." Trent had created a Google doc to facilitate a collaborative discussion on the design of the student questionnaire. He suggested that we all view the Google doc and take time to give feedback on the questions that he had developed outside of the meetings. I agreed to adjust our agenda and allow him to lead the discussion and activity.

Trent emerged as a leader within our group, and his leadership began by completing extra work outside of the group, which led to him leading a collaborative activity during meeting #6. When interviewed about his reason for creating the Google doc, he said:

So, there needs to be, to a degree, a driving force, something or someone who's going to move the ball forward, but at the same time recognize that they

themselves can't do it alone. I felt comfortable doing this because it was moving the ball forward. Let's use this structure, which is going to allow all of us to provide input, and I am going to do most of the legwork because I know if I don't, most people won't. But at the same time, we need those multiple perspectives.

Not only did he do the extra work to make progress on the student questionnaire, but he also talked about his investment in the project as a motivating factor. He said, "I want this [design] to work. I really do see a drastic need for this in ninth grade, and you need to take an active role if you want to have input to make something good." Both his desire to be an active, contributing member of the group as well as his willingness to put in the work to help us move forward and reach our goals contributed to his decision to take on a leadership role within the group.

The outcomes of his actions were both internal and external. Internally, his confidence increased, and he developed new leadership and communication skills. When interviewed, he said, "Individually, I think that I'm taking away a little more confidence." For example, he said that in a group setting, he doesn't "typically speak up too terribly often," but his comfort level in our group helped him to feel "perfectly comfortable" speaking up and requesting that we view the Google doc that he created to give him feedback on the questions for the questionnaire. His newfound confidence and comfort level in a group setting encouraged him to take on a leadership role within the group.

He also recognized that his confidence and leadership skills impacted the way others viewed him. He said, "I do think that possibly being involved in this maybe has provided other individuals a better view of who I am and what my passion is, what I'm willing to put in and invest. And, I also think that maybe I've earned a little bit of respect and recognition, and not in the power-seeking sort of way...but just that I'm very self-

conscious at times.” Three group members confirmed this new level of respect and recognition for him when they commented on his actions. Chris identified him as an emergent leader, and he noted his expertise and comfort level with questionnaires and Google Forms. Cal also saw Trent as an emergent leader in the group, and he described how his perspective on Trent’s leadership abilities changed. He said:

I think [Trent] took over as the teacher-leader, to be honest. I say that with kudos to him...honestly, [Trent], I don't see as a leader in a lot of different realms, although I've had some great personal dealings with him. I just don't see him as a larger leader. That changed my mind. It changed at least my perception of him. He's always been a great contributor, but I think he turned into the teacher-leader of the group, which was really nice to see. And I think people were okay with that too, even though we had someone designated as teacher-leader, I think she was okay with him moving into that role. Yeah, it was cool.

In addition to these comments about Trent’s leadership during interviews, Catherine also publicly acknowledged Trent and his work at the end of meeting #6 when we were discussing pluses and deltas. After her comment, everyone in the group praised him and thanked him for his work. His actions not only had a positive impact on him personally, but they also impacted the group by encouraging them to embrace a spirit of shared and emergent leadership within the group.

Participants Decided to Add an Extra Meeting

Thanks to Trent’s leadership and the work of the entire group, we finalized the student questionnaire during our last meeting. The student questionnaire was designed to gather more information about the experiences of 9th grade students during Flex Period as well as their needs as they transition to high school. The plan was for all 9th grade students to take the questionnaire the day after our last meeting. Because we did not plan to meet in June or over the summer, we decided that we would review the results of the

questionnaire in the fall of the next school year. I realized that this was not ideal because it would be several months before we could discuss the results, but I was sensitive to the time commitment of the group. I did not want to request that they stay for another meeting.

We concluded the meeting, but Bret spoke up and suggested that we meet one more time to review the preliminary results of the student questionnaire. After a brief discussion, all group members agreed to meet. I was surprised and very happy that the group wanted to meet again! I felt the suggestion to meet again and the positive response by the group members showed an increased investment in the group, a strong interest in the outcomes of the survey and a positive outlook for the future work of our group.

When interviewed, Bret explained why he suggested meeting for an eighth meeting. He said, "I was a little hesitant at the end of the year to say, 'Hey, let's do another meeting!' But, I mean, everyone seemed to be onboard with it, and I think excited and eager to look at the results." Chris agreed that the eagerness of the group to view the results showed there was a "definite, true concern regarding the issue" and there is a "true interest in supporting our students and supporting our teachers." Eight out of ten participants attended meeting #8, so the high participation rate suggests the participants were invested in the group and had a strong interest in reviewing the preliminary results of the questionnaire to learn more about the perspectives of the students.

Themes

Upon reviewing the initial planning, formation and functioning of the group, I identified a number of themes (Appendix L). I am going to focus on four of the themes

that most closely relate to my research questions. My research questions are the following:

1. What is the relationship between the actions of the school counselor and the formation and functioning of the work group?
2. What is the relationship between the characteristics and behaviors of the group members and formation and functioning of the work group?
3. What is the impact of the proposed and emergent principles and procedures on the collaborative decision-making process?

The four themes are the following:

1. Strong relationships developed.
2. Empathy for colleagues increased.
3. Guiding principles influenced planning.
4. Counselor and team members engaged in reflection.

The four themes cover all three research questions because relationships, empathy, planning, and reflection were evident in the actions of the counselor, the behaviors of the group members, and the guiding principles for the design. I will now describe each theme in detail to illustrate how these themes were integral to the process of forming and facilitating a teacher work group that aimed to promote teacher-student relationships.

Theme #1: Strong Relationships Developed

As a school counselor, my job is built on relationships. I cannot effectively support my students without building strong relationships with my students, parents,

administrators, and teachers. I found that building relationships was an integral step to each phase of forming and facilitating the teacher work group.

Administrator Relationships Were Key. The relationship building began with my assistant principal, Chris. We met several times, talked informally and emailed ideas back and forth to discuss the problem with Flex Period. I noted in my first reflection log entry that “I felt comfortable meeting with Chris because we had talked many times before this and he was supportive. I trusted him, and I felt supported by the administration in this endeavor.” Open communication and trust built the foundation for my relationship with Chris, and this was important because I needed his support to form the group and to gain buy-in from the faculty.

Relationships With Group Members Began With Early Communication.

After establishing my relationship with Chris, I focused on building relationships with the group members. My attempt to build relationships with them began before they even agreed to participate. In the email that I drafted to recruit participants, I started with an informal tone, asking how they were doing. I tried to include some questions or comments that addressed any personal things that I knew about them. I also included a personal note for each teacher stating why I thought they would be a great fit for the group. In my reflection journal, I noted, “I thought this email was extremely important because it would set the tone for the work group. I wanted the email to be friendly and inviting so I could start building relationships with these individuals right from the beginning of our communication.” I was intentionally planning to further develop existing relationships with the group members from the very beginning of the process.

Previously Established Relationships Impacted Group Formation. I

discovered early in the recruitment process that relationships did play an integral role to the group formation for some of the participants. Before agreeing to participate, Elaine called me on the phone. She asked me a few questions about the group, and then she said that she would participate. I thanked her, and I shared that I was surprised that several other people had agreed to participate as well. She said that she was not surprised because the teachers like me, and they want me to return from my sabbatical. She said that they want to keep me happy. This fascinated me because her comment suggested that some people were willing to join the group because of their relationship with me. It appeared that my relationships with others mattered.

Counselor Interactions With Group Members During Meetings Helped Build Relationships. Once the group members agreed to participate, my formal and informal interactions with them during group meetings were crucial to continuing to grow my relationships with them. In an interview, Cal described my informal interactions with group members. He said, “I think something that you tend to do that you don’t plan for, it’s been positive, is that there’s small talk before the group even starts...You asking about my son playing volleyball, or talking about your daughter being sick, or whatever it may be. You’re making personal connections as people walk in.” Getting to know the group members on a personal level helped to build relationships with them. In my reflection log, I noted, “Chatting with individuals before the meeting was a nice way to connect with them and to build relationships with my group members.” I enjoyed this part of the group process, and it was very natural for me.

Connecting Activities Supported Relationship Building Between Group

Members. Building relationships was also an important feature of the group process for the group members. When designing the agendas for each meeting, I intentionally included a connecting activity at the beginning of each meeting to encourage the group members to interact and to get to know each other. These activities typically utilized a pair-share protocol which allowed them to talk with one other person and then share their comments with the whole group. When interviewed, two group members specifically mentioned the benefits of these activities. Mary said, “I think the group activities that we did definitely supported [relationship building]. Just allowing us to share things that we maybe wouldn’t necessarily have shared. The brain dumps we did...So, I think it bridged some of the gaps that we’ve had over the years.” Trent said, “I think the interactions between us have been great. The time that we get to share our ideas and get to relate to one another has been very helpful.”

Informal Interactions Between Group Members Proved Beneficial. Although the planned connecting activities facilitated some relationship building during meetings, informal interactions between group members also proved to be beneficial. Group members often socialized before and after meetings. They also engaged in some small side conversations during group work that helped them connect around other topics they found interesting or related to their personal lives. For example, during meeting #3, several group members talked about meal prepping and their addiction to popcorn. Humor also played a big role in relationship building. In five out of eight meeting reflection log entries, I specifically noted the humor that occurred among group members.

One example occurred during meeting #4. I wrote in my reflection log that “there was a lot of laughter with group members joking around with each other. They seemed very comfortable and laid back during the discussion, and they seemed to enjoy the interactions.” During meeting #7, Bret joked about his uncertainty of when to use commas. There were many little comments throughout the meetings from various individuals that created laughter, lightened the mood and allowed group members to interact and connect on a different level.

Relationships Became a Positive Outcome of the Group Experience. The group process naturally created a social setting that allowed group members to connect, and many of them appreciated the outcome of building relationships with their colleagues. When interviewed, six group members shared that building relationships with each other was a positive outcome of their participation in the group process, and two of them additionally noted the benefit of building a relationship with an administrator. Elaine said, “I think it developed other friendships and groups. Now I see people differently than I did before.” Nora said her participation in the group was an opportunity “in our big building just to get to know somebody a little bit.” Chris, as an administrator, also found it beneficial to get to know other teachers who work outside of the departments that he supervises. He said, “I think getting to know different people was the biggest positive outcome for me.”

Building relationships was also a positive outcome for me because of my experience forming and facilitating this work group. As a school counselor, I have the opportunity to interact with teachers often, and through those interactions, I build

relationships with them. However, oftentimes the school day is so busy that our interactions have to be quick and our conversations are often centered around a student issue. During meeting #7, we took time during our connecting activity to reflect on the positive outcomes of being able to gather together each week. When I shared my reflection, I said, “It’s been really nice just to be able to gather in a different setting and be together and connect with people...I feel like a lot of times when I talk with you guys, it’s surrounded around a student problem that we have to solve.” I appreciated having the opportunity to connect with teachers on a new level in a different setting, and through the group process, I felt that I was able to build new relationships with teachers that will be beneficial to me and our school culture in many ways in the future.

Relationships Were at the Core of the Process. Overall, building relationships and making connections with people was a theme that was important for me and the group members in all stages of the group process. It also was the topic of discussion within the work group as we attempted to understand our challenge that involved improving Flex Period for students. Relationships were at the core of this process and the work of the group, and they also turned out to be one of the most valuable outcomes for both the group members and me.

Theme #2: Empathy for Colleagues Increased

Empathy is often a key component to building relationships; therefore, empathy also played a big role in each stage of the group process.

Needs Assessment Increased Empathy. During the initial planning stage, I felt it was important that I find out more information about the historical change initiatives and

planning processes from the perspective of teachers in the building. I also wanted to be able to gain a sense of their emotions related to change and their past experiences. After conducting a needs assessment, I wrote in my reflection log, “This process really helped me to understand the context of the situation...Many teachers referenced a time in the past when they served on committees to make decisions about school-wide changes, but in the end, they only made recommendations. The administrators made their own decisions and many people were hurt in the process.” Conducting the needs assessment allowed me to understand the teachers’ feelings that surrounded their past experiences, and it helped me to plan for their cynicism toward change and their lack of trust in the group planning process.

Empathy Impacted Counselor Communication. During the group formation process, I showed empathy to the teachers by being mindful of their emotions and feelings of mistrust. I attempted to communicate with them about each step of the process. I wanted to be inclusive, transparent and open about the process. After Chris sent the first email to the faculty with information about the group, I wrote in my reflection log, “I felt that this email would be very important because it was the first email to the whole school that was letting them know that we were starting [the group] and that they would be included if they had any interest in participating in some way. I did not want anyone to feel excluded. I wanted to try to start to gain buy-in from the beginning by being inclusive and transparent.” Empathizing with the teachers is what encouraged me to take this open and honest approach because I knew that their fear could result in

skepticism about the purpose of the group as well as the group process that would be used.

Empathy Drove the Setting and Meeting Design. In addition to communication, empathy also played a role in the group formation stage of the process when I determined the setting of the meetings as well as the design of the meetings. I was very aware of the fact that teachers are extremely busy, and their jobs can be stressful and demanding. I knew that we would be meeting after school hours, so they would be tired and ready to go home. Because of this, I wanted to create a relaxing, inviting atmosphere that was conducive to an interactive, productive and time-sensitive meeting. I selected a room in our building that had soft lighting, decorations, and a mix of comfortable couches and student desks. I was able to easily arrange the seating into a U-shape that would allow us to make eye-contact with each other during discussions. I brought snacks to every meeting to show my appreciation for their attendance and to provide some fuel to help them focus at the end of a school day. I designed an agenda for each meeting that clearly outlined our goals for the day, and I included a time limit for each agenda item to keep us on track. I valued their time, and I wanted to make sure that we started and ended promptly. I attempted to include activities that were engaging and meaningful because I wanted them to enjoy their time in the group while feeling productive. I empathized with the group members knowing the challenges of participating in a meeting after teaching for a full day.

The meeting setting and design were very important to me and to the success of our group, and many of the group members noticed this. When interviewed, four group

members talked about various features of the meeting setting and design that were appreciated and conducive to a productive meeting. Mary said, “There were silly things that I think helped: the room setup, the lighting. Just all of that just makes an experience better, especially for outside of a workday. I think all of that played into the buy-in for the teachers.” Lillian also noted the snacks being a feature of the meeting setting. She said, “I like having snacks. That was nice.” Bret stressed the importance of the time-sensitive agenda that valued their time. He said, “It’s just refreshing to see our time being valued, and the clear agenda and the promptness. We’re appreciative.” Empathy for group members drove many decisions that impacted meetings because I wanted them to have a good experience in the group while feeling productive and accomplished.

Human-Centered Process Encouraged Group Members to Empathize With Others. Another finding related to the theme of empathy was that group members empathized with other stakeholders and with each other because of their participation in the work group. As explained above, group members empathized with our faculty in regard to their cynicism of change. This was evident in the intense dialogue that occurred when deciding how to introduce our group and how to share our work with the faculty. Group members understood and shared the faculty’s feelings of concern when presented with another possible change.

In addition to empathizing with the faculty in relation to future change, the group members also empathized with students and teachers who would be impacted by our future design of Flex Period. To encourage this practice of empathy, the group engaged in an activity during meeting #4 that asked them to define their audience. During this

activity, I attempted to stress the importance of being empathetic and human-centered while keeping all stakeholders in mind as we design. Chris described the impact this activity had on our group. He said, “We looked at some of the needs that teachers might have, some of the needs that students might have. I think we realized that we wanted to see the student perspective.” Bret also appreciated the opportunity to discuss the various groups of stakeholders and their needs. He said, “I think the valuable thing...was us looking at the different stakeholders and having empathy, and troubleshooting, or almost anticipating, and just at least being respectful and...cognizant of the other people that are going to be impacted by this.” Empathy played a role in the discussions about our design, and we maintained a human-centered focus throughout the group process.

Empathy Was a Positive Outcome for Group Members. When interviewed, seven out of nine group members shared that a positive outcome of their participation in the work group was becoming more empathetic towards others. They appreciated the opportunity to hear different perspectives of teachers because this helped them to better understand their perspective and their emotions that were related to Flex Period and potential future changes. Catherine said, “I learned that some people feel overwhelmed during [Flex Period]...And it benefits me, personally, just to help me be more empathetic to other people’s issues. I don’t have my antennae out all the time, so I don’t know what other people are dealing with.” Mary noted the benefits of having a diverse group of individuals because we could “hear their input from different departments and from different perspectives.” Lillian said that the group process “broadened her horizons” by

teaching her more about what other people think, and then she used this information to inform her decisions that were made in the group.

Human-Centered Practices Changed How a Group Member Would Lead a Group. This perspective on empathizing as a means to make decisions also impacted Bret as he reflected on how he would lead a group one day. Bret explained that his impulsivity would have led to decision making before showing empathy and considering the needs and emotions of others. Bret explained, “So, [the experience in this group] changed, impacted my impulsivity, and really thinking through any opportunity that I would ever have to lead a group...just consideration for all of the other stakeholders involved...So, it helped me to realize that my shortcoming, if I were doing this, it would have been done way too quickly.” He now considers empathy to be a key principle in the group process, and his leadership style will change in the future.

Empathizing Was a Key Feature of the Group Process. Overall, empathizing was a theme that was important for the counselor and the group members in all stages of the group process. I included empathy as a guiding principle for the design of the group process, but I did not realize the widespread impact that it would have on the entire group process. To summarize, empathy influenced the development of the needs assessment to learn more about teachers’ emotions related to change; the transparent and inclusive communication with group members; the meeting setting and the design of the meetings; the group members’ awareness of the needs of stakeholders; and, the development of a sense of community within the group by listening to different perspectives of group

members and becoming more aware of their emotions. Empathizing with others was a key feature of the group process that resulted in a productive and enjoyable experience

Theme #3: Guiding Principles Influenced Planning

Empathy played a role in the planning and facilitation of the group process because I kept the participants at the heart of the process. In order to do this, there were many steps that I had to accomplish before, during, and after meetings to effectively plan for an engaging and productive experience for the participants. The guiding principles of the design helped to guide me when I was planning and facilitating a meeting, and many participants acknowledged the importance of these features and attributed much of the success of our meetings to my ability to effectively plan and facilitate the meetings. Additionally, the group members contributed to the planning process through the open and honest feedback that they provided throughout the group process. As the group facilitator, I found their feedback to be extremely helpful.

Organizational Structure of the Meetings Was a Result of Extensive Planning. My planning began by designing structures for group planning. I wanted our meetings to be organized, purposeful, time-efficient and engaging. I wanted the meetings to flow effortlessly while resulting in productive outcomes at the end of every meeting. To do this, I planned for every meeting by determining our goals and objectives for the meeting and then designing the agenda with appropriate activities that would help us reach our goals. I wanted the activities to be structured yet engaging, and I attempted to include activities that would encourage collaboration and positive interactions among group members. I consulted the literature as well as educational experts to help guide my

planning, and I adjusted our meeting structure throughout the process based on the feedback from the group members. The organizational structure evolved as the group process progressed. The planning took a significant amount of time, but it allowed the facilitation of the meetings to go much more smoothly.

Group members took note of the organizational structure for the group process that resulted from the extensive planning. When interviewed, six participants mentioned the positive aspects of the organizational structure. Bret said, “[The meeting] was just very positive in terms of organization and purpose, vision, planning. You know, from my end, it was just appreciated. It was refreshing.” Lillian also found the meetings to be structured differently than other meetings that she has attended. She said that our meetings were “more organized” than previous work groups that she worked in, and she appreciated the organization because she knew what to expect. Bret also reflected on his own planning in leadership positions, and he said, “From your end in the organization, I think it’s great. I can’t imagine how much time you put into planning, but I like the consistency...It’s refreshing to me because yesterday when we were [meeting during a work group session], I’m like, ‘Why am I not doing this? This is good.’ So, a testament to your leadership and how much thought that you must have put into all of this in the planning.” The organizational structure of the meetings helped to guide the interactions of the group members, so extensive planning was necessary to ensure that the structure helped us to reach our goals.

Agenda Planning Effectively Communicates Clear Goals and Objectives.

Planning for the organizational structure of the group process involved establishing clear

goals and objectives for each meeting. I wanted everyone to know the purpose of each activity, so I wrote a goal or outcome for each activity on the agenda. I also reviewed the agenda with the group at the beginning of each meeting, so they knew what to expect, why we were doing each activity, and what we hoped to accomplish. Eight out of nine participants discussed the planning that resulted in clear goals and objectives that guided our meetings. Lillian said, “Having a checklist almost, like, ‘We have to get this done today. We have to get this done today.’ I think that was helpful.” Chris liked having a “clear focus for each meeting’ and using an agenda to guide us. Cal talked about the planning that went into the development of the objectives and the agendas. He said, “I think the clear agenda that was set ahead of time was helpful. I don’t just mean the task-oriented piece of it. When I think of an agenda, I think of you, as the leader, put thought into it. How do I get this point across? How do I get this interaction? How do I get to this end? You can tell, I don’t know if everyone understood that from being in groups before, but I understood that was the process.” Planning and communicating clear goals and objectives were appreciated by group members, and they shared how this helped our group process run smoothly and efficiently.

Planning Was Adjusted Based on Group Feedback. Although group members appreciated the organizational structure and the clear goals and objectives for each meeting, not all the outcomes of my planning were accepted and appreciated by the group initially. For example, during the group formation stage of the process, I had planned for us to discuss and select group norms for the group. Based on my review of the literature and talking with educational experts, I believed that articulating and defining group

norms was critical to ensuring successful collaboration throughout the duration of the group process. During meeting #1, Catherine was vocal about her disagreement with the need to establish group norms. Several other group members agreed with her statement. After further discussion with Catherine, the group leader, and other group members during our dialogue in meetings, group members came to embrace the idea of establishing group norms as a part of the planning process.

By planning an activity that was sensitive to their needs, I had hoped they would be more open to discussing and selecting group norms. I intentionally planned an activity that was short and did not involve much discussion. Instead, the group members wrote their ideas on index cards, and I reviewed them after the meeting. I thought this would reduce their level of discomfort with this activity. After participating in the activity, establishing group norms, and revisiting the agreed-upon norms during our reflection activities, group members found value in this activity. Lillian and Mary both stated that they liked establishing group norms. Lillian explained, "I liked that we went around and thought of group norms, like things that we should all kind of be held to. I think that was important, especially for making sure that we stay on task." Chris explained that he felt that group norms supported relationship building within the group. He said, "I do think by having the norms in place and being able to freely and openly discuss our concerns and question each other, I mean, I think it gave us the opportunity to build those relationships with the group members." The planning that was involved in incorporating the activity into the group norms process was critical to its success and the opportunity for group members to find value in it.

Counselor Planning and Facilitation Skills Encouraged a Culture of

Dialogue. One group norm that was established by the group was, “Encourage all members to participate by sharing and listening.” This group norm was closely related to a guiding principle that I included when planning and facilitating the group. Establishing a culture of dialogue was the guiding principle. To foster a culture of dialogue, I intentionally planned and designed activities that encouraged the sharing of ideas, beliefs and perspectives. Additionally, I strategically employed a range of facilitation skills to lead and moderate group discussion that occurred during the meetings. I had to listen to group members’ ideas, ask questions to clarify their thoughts, and attempt to balance participation to ensure that there were no dominators or hibernators during the discussions. These actions when facilitating meetings fostered a culture of dialogue that was open, honest and respectful.

Several group members described how my actions during planning and group facilitation impacted the culture of dialogue in our group. Lillian and Mary talked about certain structures and activities that led to more equal participation. During a reflection activity during meeting #3, Lillian said, “It’s good being paired up, instead of like, one person talks at a time, or the whole group.” During an interview, Mary said, “I like [structured discussions]...I do feel like if you leave it more open-ended, you will get people who participate often and people who will sit there and not really participate...I think it gives everyone a voice.” After meeting #4, Catherine noted a change in the culture of dialogue within the group over time. She said, “I think there might be just a little bit more of an equity of voices now, and that’s a good thing.” This change could be

a result of the planning and facilitation during group meetings that increased the level of trust and comfort within the group.

Counselor Improved Planning and Facilitation Skills Throughout Group

Process. Overall, planning and facilitating was a theme that described my actions as the group facilitator and had a major impact on the overall experience of the participants throughout the group process. As a school counselor, my planning and facilitation skills grew tremendously as a result of this experience. I am now better at establishing effective structures for group planning, designing agendas with clear objectives and goals, leading meaningful activities and discussions on group norms, and facilitating groups in a way that fosters a culture of dialogue. I have changed because of this experience, and my actions led to a more effective group process. The group members also changed because of my planning and facilitation because they came to embrace certain structures and procedures that were new to them, and they found them valuable and productive.

Theme #4: Counselor and Group Members Engaged in Reflection

When planning for meetings, I not only used my knowledge and experience to make decisions about the meeting design and process; instead, I planned and adjusted our meeting structure throughout the process based on feedback from the group members.

Reflection Improved the Group Process. The group members provided feedback by participating in reflection activities such as the plus/delta activity. Additionally, I engaged in reflective practices such as keeping a reflection log and participating in a critical friend interview to help me become more aware of my thoughts and my actions as the group facilitator. I, along with other group members, engaged in

reflection, and I intentionally acted on this feedback by making necessary changes to the group process in order to improve our group functioning.

During the seventh meeting, three group members mentioned the positive impact that group reflection had on our group process, and during interviews, five participants talked about the value of group reflection as well. Reflecting on the group process was new for some group members. Catherine said, “I think the fact that we actually reflect on the health and efficiency of our group, makes our group more healthy and efficient. I’ve never been in a group so far that has actively done this, particularly every group meeting, so I think it’s pretty useful.” Nora also said, “I think having time to reflect and then proceed, I think was a good takeaway...I just need to do more reflecting.” During interviews, three participants shared that they found the group reflection to be so helpful that they are now using it in their classrooms. Their practices changed because of their positive experience in the work group.

Reflection Created Safe Space and Gave Group Members a Voice. In addition to reflection being honed as a skill for enhancing group processes, group reflection also impacted the group dynamics the work group. Chris explained that the plus/delta activity created “a safe haven” that “opened those lines of communication and made it easier for people to just work together.” Catherine also noted that my follow-through on the reflection of the group process made a positive impact on the group dynamics. She said, “You go out of your way to make sure that when you ask us questions you show us that you've heard us. And it's important to you. You're actually cognizant of it, and I think that that's also some of the problems with other groups, is the people who are in charge are so

focused on the end product that they're not even considering group dynamics.” By responding to the needs of the group, I made them feel like their perspectives mattered. Trust grew, and they became more open and honest in their dialogue when they knew that I valued their opinions and truly wanted to improve the process.

Counselor Self-Reflection Was Beneficial to the Group Process, Self-Confidence, and Emotions. Finally, I also engaged in reflective practices to help myself grow as a group leader and facilitator. First, I kept a reflective log to make note of my thoughts and emotions that were related to my actions. Many times, I wrote questions to myself wondering what I could do differently to improve a certain practice. For example, in my reflection log entry following meeting #4, I wondered how improving my facilitation skills could have resulted in a more positive effect on the group. I wrote:

I felt I could have asked more probing questions to encourage more discussion. For example, when one teacher mentioned that becoming a teacher was like the American dream for her and her family, that was a very personal piece of information that she shared, and I just said, “Got it,” and moved on. I am wondering if I had probed more about this and asked more questions about her experience, how that would have made her feel if I had shown more interest in her story. I think it could have also increased trust and open communication in the group if she was willing to share a personal story with all of us. I think I prioritized time and felt pressured to keep moving in the agenda instead of the meaningfulness of the activity.

After reflecting on what I wrote here, I became more attentive to meaningful dialogue in subsequent meetings. I attempted to take time to explore these comments, especially if they were personal, in order to increase trust and open communication. I also tried not to be overly concerned about time because I did not want to rush through important activities.

In addition to reflection log entries, I also engaged in reflection through discussions with the teacher leader and the interview with my critical friend. Talking with other educational professionals greatly helped me to view my actions and the group process from a different perspective. It was extremely helpful to gain their feedback since I used their suggestions to make changes in my actions or the group process. At times, they gave me positive feedback, and this feedback increased my confidence and improved my emotions related to the group planning process. In my final reflection log following the interview with my critical friend, I wrote:

After listening to the interview, I realized that I had a variety of emotions that surrounded this group. There were definitely feelings of uncertainty and worry at the beginning of the group. The concern is still there...but I can tell that there is more confidence in the direction of our group, how the meetings are organized and facilitated and the dynamics within the group. I can tell that self-confidence in my leadership abilities is rising, and I am feeling more positive overall about the experience.

I did not anticipate that reflection would have a positive impact on my emotions and self-confidence, but I appreciated the constructive feedback from professionals who had experience with collaborative planning processes. Because of this experience with reflection, I feel I am more open to engaging in reflection in all aspects of my profession. I feel that personal reflection and feedback from others can only help me improve as an individual as well as my role as a group facilitator.

Reflection Was a New Practice for Many. Overall, reflecting was a theme that was evident throughout the group process for both myself and the group members. As the group facilitator, I planned for group reflection, and as a result, our group processes improved, productivity increased, and the group members felt they had a voice because

their opinions were valued. My personal reflection resulted in improvement in my skills as the group facilitator, my emotions and self-confidence, and the overall functioning of the group. Reflecting was a new practice for many of us, but it has become a practice that will be utilized in other areas of our professional endeavors.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

This dissertation sought to explore how a school counselor forms and facilitates a teacher work group. In many ways this study was a success. First, a work group was formed, and I facilitated eight meetings. The qualitative data that was collected during the process resulted in a sequence of events that occurred, and it captured the serious importance that relationships, empathy, planning, and reflection all had on the formation and facilitation process. These four features of the planning process were evident in the actions of the counselor (myself), the behaviors of the group members, and the guiding principles for the design. In the following section, I will utilize the literature to formulate a deeper, more profound understanding of the four themes that emerged from my data: relationships, empathy, planning, and reflection.

Relationships Influenced Leadership Style, Relational Trust, Group Productivity, and Professional Experience of Group Members

One key finding that was discussed in Chapter 5 was the theme of relationships and its importance to the process of forming and facilitating the work group. First, the development and sustenance of my relationships with the participants were integral to my ability to lead the group as the group facilitator because I was a colleague of the group members, not an administrator. Venables (2018) explains that when a team facilitator is a colleague, not an administrator, their leadership on the team is based on relationships because they have no other leverage than their relationships with the group members.

This was true in this case study; therefore, relationships were of the utmost importance to the process and outcomes of the group.

Second, building relationships was also important for fostering relational trust. Bryk and Schneider (2003) found that day-to-day social exchanges that are grounded in mutual respect help to build relational trust, which leads to open, honest conversations with colleagues. My interactions with the group members during meetings built relational trust, which contributed to a culture of dialogue that was necessary for moving forward with sound decision-making throughout the process.

Finally, the relationships that were established between group members propelled the progress of the group. According to Sheninger and Murray (2017), authentic trusting relationships make transformational, sustainable change possible. The relationships that were built within the work group supported our effort and productivity, but they also extended beyond the meetings. Newly formed relationships developed over time, and they were an unintended outcome of the work group that had a positive impact on the process as well as the personal and professional lives of the group members.

Relationships Were Integral to the Process and the Content of the Work Group

One unique aspect of the work group in this study was that relationships were integral to the process of the work group and they were also a focus of our dialogue and work during each meeting. The goal of the work group was to design a planning process that would yield a revised Flex Period for 9th graders, and the ultimate goal of the revised Flex Period was to enhance TSRs to increase school connectedness for freshman students. Because this was our vision for Flex Period, relationships were at the heart of

many of our discussions and decisions. We discussed the current state of relationships between teachers and students during Flex Period, and we envisioned how a new and enhanced Flex Period could impact TSRs. We talked about how relational factors such as emotional caring, empathy, and trust would be critical for classroom processes to flourish in Flex Period.

As the meetings progressed, a parallel between the content and process of the work group became evident. Just as the work group valued relationships for our students, we also valued relationships within our work group. It was fortuitous that the topics of relationships, trust, caring and empathy were relevant to both the content and the process of the work group. This connection allowed us to model and experience the formation of positive relationships within the work group before launching into the process of enacting these same practices with students. We were able to discover an alignment between the essential aspects of positive collegial relationships and positive TSRs, which ultimately benefited the process and final outcomes of the group. The strong parallel between the content and the process of the work group allowed me to apply principles from TSRs to the design principles for forming and facilitating a teacher work group, which I will discuss in a later section in this chapter.

The Design of the Work Group Resulted in Enhanced Individual Motivation and a Unique Set of Group Processes

The design of the work group not only resulted in the development of positive collegial relationships, but it also resulted in enhanced individual motivation among the members of the work group as well as a unique set of group processes. To explain what

happened at an individual level, I will use self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). I will describe the practices that I used to support the psychological needs of the individual, which enhanced intrinsic motivation, internalization and psychological functioning. Although an explanation of individual motivation is necessary, the individuals in this study were not the main unit of analysis. I focused on the group; therefore, it is important to recognize that the individuals and the group were interdependent. There was a relationship among them. After discussing the individual motivation of the team members, I will also interpret what happened at the group level. To do this, I will use Hammar Chiriac's scheme for understanding group processes (Hammar Chiriac, 2008), which is a combination of Steiner's theory of group processes and productivity (Steiner, 1972) and Bion's theory of the professional work group (Bion, 1961). Finally, I will end this chapter with the design principles that emerged as a result of these experiences.

Enhanced Individual Motivation was Evident through the Behaviors of the Group Members

Motivation refers to “the processes of both initiating and sustaining behavior” (Linnenbrink-Garcia & Patall, 2016, p. 91). Enhanced individual motivation was evident through the actions of the group members. Based on the findings that were shared in Chapter 5, these are the actions of the group members that indicated individual motivation: group members participated in eight meetings and assumed leadership roles within the group; group members engaged in open, honest dialogue during meetings; group members embraced group structures; group members developed and agreed upon

group goals; group members produced tangible and intangible outcomes; group members built relationships and empathized with stakeholders; group members took collective responsibility for the mission of the group. The focus of this study was to learn more about how my practices and the design of the work group motivated the individuals in the group to perform these actions.

The Design and Facilitation Practices Supported Group Members' Psychological Needs for Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness

Self-determination theory suggests that motivation that promotes growth and wellbeing is enhanced when the three psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are supported (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The design of this study and my practices as the group leader facilitated a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness within the group, which led to an increased level of individual motivation for the group members. I will now discuss in more detail the aspects of the design and the practices that I used to support these three psychological needs.

Autonomy

Autonomy is the experience that one's behavior is self-determined. Ryan and Deci (2000) explain that the psychological need for autonomy is facilitated by "a sense of choice, volition, and freedom from excessive pressure toward behavior or thinking a certain way" (p. 74). During the needs assessment, many individuals shared their concerns that our group process would not meet their need for autonomy because of their historical experiences with the change process. Because of this, I intentionally created a structure and developed activities that would facilitate a sense of autonomy. First, I

allowed group members to develop their own goals and design their own methods for accomplishing these goals. Second, my actions contributed to the development of a culture of dialogue that was open and honest so I could listen to their ideas and acknowledge their feelings. Finally, I supported shared leadership and allowed for opportunities of self-direction within the group. I wanted my actions and the design to support their belief that their behavior was self-determined, not externally controlled.

Competence

Perceived competence, or self-efficacy, refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to perform. Ryan and Deci (2000) suggest that social-contextual events such as feedback, communication, and clear expectations can conduce feelings of competence and enhance motivation. Reeve (2006) describes the type of feedback and communication that supports perceived-competence in students as "information-rich, competence-affirming utterances" that are used to explain why students are performing well or making progress. In addition to communication, Reeve (2006) also describes how structure can support competence and autonomy. A structured environment that revolves around a leader clearly communicating expectations and offering appropriate, attainable plans, goals, schedules, challenges, prompts, rewards, and feedback, supports perceived competence and autonomy.

Through the design and my practices as group facilitator, I encouraged a sense of perceived competency and efficacy through structure and communication. First, I established organized routines that were flexible in nature to provide the group members with clarity on tasks along with freedom of choice, voice and initiative. As a leader, I

learned to put less and less on the agenda each time to enable flexibility with our work. The activities were challenging yet appropriate for the abilities of our group members, and I provided positive feedback throughout the group process both verbally as well as through written communication in emails and notes that were sent to the group. During our meetings, I conducted frequent check-ins with the group during reflection activities to make sure they felt they could attain our goals, and I allowed for opportunities for them to share their thoughts and feelings if they did not feel competent. I wanted the design and my actions to facilitate their sense of competency and efficacy through the group structure and my communication.

Relatedness

Relatedness is the need to feel connected with others. SDT explains that relatedness is especially important for extrinsically motivated behaviors that are not innately interesting because people initially perform such actions because the behaviors are “prompted, modeled, or valued by significant others to whom they feel (or want to feel) attached or related” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 73). As the group facilitator, I attempted to be warm, caring, interactive and responsive to the needs of the group. I focused on creating a safe environment that fostered trust and encouraged investment in relationships. I developed goals and planned connecting activities that focused on relationship building. These practices as the group facilitator and components of the design encouraged the development of relationships within the group, which supported the group members’ psychological need for relatedness.

The Design Supported the Psychological Needs of the School Counselor

Through self-reflective practices, I also discovered that the design supported my psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which ultimately enhanced my motivation as the group facilitator. My need for autonomy was supported when my administrators allowed me to create the design and take a grass-roots approach to solving a problem. They were supportive and provided feedback, but they gave me freedom to decide how to proceed when leading the work group. My need for competence was supported when I realized that my competency as a group leader steadily increased over time. I lacked confidence in my ability to lead initially, but as I gained skills and received positive feedback from group members, my competency increased. Finally, my need for relatedness was supported through the relationships that I developed and strengthened with the group members and with my administrator. Through our interactions, we were able to connect personally and professionally while working toward a common goal that would positively impact our school.

Individual Motivation of Group Members Benefited Group Dynamics

SDT explains how the design and my actions as the group leader facilitated a sense of autonomy, competency and relatedness among individual group members and me. By supporting these three psychological needs, self-motivation was enhanced. Because the individuals and the work group were interdependent, there was a relationship between them. The enhanced individual motivation of the group members had a positive impact on the group dynamics. I will now use Hammar Chiriac's scheme for

understanding group processes (Hammar Chiriac, 2008) to interpret how the components of the design and the strategies that I used manifested in the group.

Hammar Chiriac's Scheme Offers a Comprehensive and Descriptive Understanding of the Group Dynamic

Group dynamics are impacted by the form of emotional level in the group (work or basic-assumption) and the type of activity or task (additive, disjunctive, conjunctive, compensatory, complementary) in which the group engages (Bion, 1961; Steiner, 1972). When the emotional level and type of task are combined, a metaphor is used to describe the type of group process and to give the reader a mental picture of the process. I will use five of the fifteen metaphors created by Hammar Chiriac (2008) to describe the dynamic processes that were found in the work group in this study. The five metaphors are *mountaineering*, *stoning*, *coffee party*, *expert* and *tug-of-war*. These metaphors will characterize the types of group processes that occurred, which were impacted by the strategies that I utilized (relationship building, empathizing, planning and reflecting) and the individual motivation of the group members.

Mountaineering

The work group began in a working condition acting in a conjunctive way. Hammar Chiriac (2008) calls this *mountaineering* (work/conjunctive). Mountaineering is characterized by “group members’ united efforts and assembled exploitation of the group’s competence and problem-solving. The group is not finished until all members have ‘climbed the mountain’” (Hammar Chiriac, 2008, p. 513-514). In this condition, the group members in this study attempted to understand the challenge of our group by

asking questions and engaging in meaningful dialogue to analyze or elucidate the challenge. We described Flex Period in its current state, and we discussed the supportive and unsupportive features of Flex Period. We asked questions, provided explanation and analyzed our challenge. We did not move on in the process until all group members fully understood the challenge. During our time in the working condition when we were mountaineering, our efforts were united, and we utilized the competence of all group members before moving forward.

Stoning

Hammar Chiriac (2008) explains that even groups that spend most of their time productively sometimes waver and act in a more regressive mode. At times, when the work group was attempting to understand the challenge, it was evident that the group process slipped into *stoning* (fight/complementary) mode. Hammar Chiriac (2008) describes the stoning mode as a time when “all or several group members add critical contributions, i.e. throw his or her stone” (p. 514). Although most of the dialogue that took place to understand the challenge was productive, at times, group members would share complaints about tasks that were assigned during Flex Period that they felt were unreasonable or overwhelming. I wanted them to be able to openly share their feelings that surrounded the issue, but I noticed that these complaints reduced our productivity and distracted the group from a tough task. I attempted to facilitate the group in a way that encouraged the group members to share their feelings while remaining focused and on task.

Coffee Party

Another group process that occurred while acting in a regressive mode was *coffee party* (flight/complementary). Hammar Chiriac (2008) describes a coffee party as group condition that starts with a joke and then continues with various humorous stories and jokes that distract the group from a challenging task. This occurred in the work group in this study several times, especially as the group members developed relationships with one another. As they felt more comfortable in the group setting, they would naturally joke with each other. Although this was distracting at times, it also facilitated relatedness among group members, which encouraged the strengthening of relationships and the development of trust. As the group facilitator, I tried to manage the coffee party group process to not allow it to get out of control and result in a negative outcome.

Expert

Although our group fell into a regressive mode at times, we were able to return to a productive working condition. One example of this occurred when we were in working condition acting in a disjunctive way. Hammar Chiriac (2008) calls this group process *expert* (work/disjunctive). Expert is an expression of a group dependent on the most successful member where one group member takes over control and responsibility for the work of the group. This occurred in the work group when Trent emerged as a leader during the development of the student questionnaire. He led this task because he was motivated to speed up the work and because he was confident and had experience with developing questionnaires. He led the group in a collaborative effort to develop a set of questions for the questionnaire, and he created the questionnaire electronically using

Google Forms. As the group facilitator, I encouraged his efforts because I wanted our group members to share in the leadership and decision-making of the group. I welcomed and embraced his leadership, and the rest of the members did as well.

Tug-of-War

During the last few meetings, our group focused on creating a presentation to present to the faculty, and we shifted from the *expert* working condition to *tug-of-war* (work/additive). Tug-of-war serves to exemplify a group in working condition acting in an additive way. Group members equally add their ideas, and the added sum of ideas is the result (Hammar Chiriac, 2008). This occurred when we were determining how to present our work to the faculty. We wanted the presentation to produce the least amount of anxiety as possible, so we all added our ideas to the table. The result was a conglomeration of the group's ideas, and we were all able to equally contribute based on our experiences and our knowledge about our colleagues.

Five Metaphors Demonstrate the Complex and Contradictory Work Conditions and Process of the Work Group

Hammar Chiriac's (2008) work suggests that work groups entail complex and sometimes contradictory work conditions and processes. The shift from a working condition to a regressive state can even be beneficial to a group if used to relieve tension, allow breaks from intense engagement, or restore relationships. The results of this study confirm this notion as evidenced by the five metaphors of *mountaineering*, *stoning*, *coffee party*, *expert*, and *tug-of-war* that illustrated the contradictory group processes that occurred in the work group. These metaphors were impacted by the practices that I

engaged in (relationship building, empathizing, planning and reflecting) and the enhanced individual motivation of the group members. Hammar Chiriac (2008) suggests that group dynamics can have a great impact on the learning and productivity of a group; therefore, it was important to pay attention to and gain a better understanding of the interactional processes that occurred in the work group in this study.

The Design, Individual Motivation, and Group Processes Were Interrelated

When attempting to understand the relationship between the design, the enhanced individual motivation, and group processes, the literature helps to demonstrate the interrelatedness among each component. As described above, the nature of the design and my actions as the group facilitator enhanced the individual motivation of the group members and influenced the group processes that occurred; however, the motivation of the group members and the unique group dynamics also impacted the design of the planning process. Because of the generative nature of the planning process, the design was constantly evolving, and the enhanced motivation and group processes influenced the design. The design, individual motivation, and group processes were interrelated, and at the heart of these three entities were the four themes of relationships, empathy, planning, and reflection.

Principles of Collaborative Teams and TSRs Contribute to Design Principles

As a result of this experience as a school counselor who formed and facilitated a work group, several design principles have emerged from the study. Because the design of my intervention was a work group, I was able to recruit principles from collaborative teams to the design principles for forming and facilitating a teacher work group. In

addition, I recruited principles from TSRs to the design principles because of the strong parallel between the content and the process of the work group. I will now share the design principles that school counselors can use as practitioners when forming and facilitating teacher work groups. If a school counselor wants to form and facilitate a teacher work group, they should do the following:

- Demonstrate emotional caring through warm, open interactions to build relationships and trust because leadership is built on relationships.
- Allow empathy to guide planning, communication, and the design process and enhance a sense of community through cohesion.
- Engage in thorough planning to organize the collaborative structure and work of the team.
- Keep plans flexible and responsive to team needs.
- Engage in group reflection to create a safe space, refine the group process and give group members a voice.
- Support positive collegial relationships and interactional group processes to propel the progress of the team.

These design principles address each of the four themes that were integral to the formation and facilitation of the work group, and they represent the core elements of the intervention that will be necessary for school counselors to employ when leading collaborative decision-making processes.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This design study examined how a school counselor organized and promoted an effective work group that aimed to support the formation of desirable teacher-student relationships. I wanted to know more about how to design a planning process and to understand how the design that I developed would support the decision-making process of the work group. I was guided by three main questions: What is the relationship between the actions of the school counselor and the formation and functioning of the work group? What is the relationship between the characteristics and behaviors of the group members and the formation and functioning of the work group? What is the impact of the proposed and emergent principles and procedures on the collaboration decision-making process?

The study was conducted in a large suburban school high school in Pennsylvania and focused on the practices of the school counselor, the behaviors of the group members and the guiding principles that influenced that group process. There were many key moments that occurred during the formation of the group and the facilitation of the eight meetings; however, I chose to focus on four major themes that emerged from the data that were most closely aligned with the guiding questions. The four themes were (a) strong relationships developed, (b) empathy for colleagues increased, (c) guiding principles influenced planning, and (d) counselor and team members engaged in reflection. After consulting the literature to better understand the importance of these themes, I developed

design principles for school counselors to use as practitioners when forming and facilitating a teacher work group.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, I was the school counselor who formed and facilitated the work group. Because I was the counselor and researcher, I found it difficult from a research perspective to observe my practices and the interactional dynamics of the group while I was facilitating the meetings. I attempted to gather in-depth data through the use of reflection logs, observations, interviews and audio recordings of the meetings; however, it would be beneficial in the future to conduct this study with two different individuals: a group facilitator and a researcher.

Furthermore, because I was the focus of the study and I was the researcher, there could have been a certain amount of experimenter bias that was present in this study. I had a stake in the success of this group and the success of the study. I wanted the group to be productive; therefore, my personal bias could have influenced the results of the study. For example, during data analysis, I could have focused on the positive outcomes rather than the negative outcomes of the study because I wanted the group to succeed. By having a different school counselor lead the work group, the risk for experimental bias could be dramatically reduced.

Another limitation of the study was that I conducted the study in the high school in which I am a school counselor. Because I am embedded in the school, relational dynamics from prior interactions with group members existed, which could have impacted the formation and facilitation of the work group. The impact could have been

positive or negative; therefore, a neutral setting in a future study could be beneficial to understanding the results of the study.

The setting also impacted the design challenge. Because the work group was formed and facilitated in my school, I selected a design challenge that I knew was a problem for all who participated in the work group. My prior knowledge allowed me to select a problem that all teachers found nettlesome. Because all group members agreed with the problem and supported the design challenge, the group processes most likely proceeded in a more positive and productive manner than if the group did not agree on the problem. My prior knowledge of the nature of the problem and design challenge is a limitation to this study by potentially limiting natural conflict that could have occurred within the group processes.

Finally, this study looked at one school counselor and one work group that was formed within a specific context. Because of the narrow scope of the study, it is difficult to generalize the findings and apply them to all situations and contexts.

Implications for Practice

This study can be meaningful to all who encounter it. First, the role of the school counselor is changing. School counselors are collaborating with other stakeholders, advocating for systemic change, and taking on the mindset of an educational leader in order to help all students succeed. Many of these new roles require them to transcend hierarchical boundaries and renegotiate role definitions. This study illustrates how a school counselor assumed a leadership role within a high school and navigated these challenges both externally and internally.

Because fundamental changes in role definitions can be challenging, some school counselors may feel uncomfortable with these changes. Showing sensitivity to counselors as they engage in new leadership roles is critical. In this study, I navigated the new role as a group facilitator alone. I received support from experts in the field as well as my critical friend; however, I navigated the leadership position without the support of an experienced school counselor who had led a teacher work group in the past. This study suggests a need for future professional development, possibly in the form of mentoring, for school counselors who engage in leadership positions that require them to form and facilitate teacher work groups. A mentor or experienced group leader could help school counselors develop the necessary skills to successfully lead a group of teachers.

Presently, professional development of this type is uncommon; therefore, school counselors reading this study can use the design principles to guide them as they attempt to take on leadership roles within their schools. Because school counselors have a unique role in the school that is different from administrators, school counselors will have to consider a different approach to forming and facilitating teacher work groups. The hope is that school counselors can learn from this study, apply the design principles, and successfully design a collaborative planning process to effectively create change. Finally, all educational leaders and teachers are responsible for designing school processes that lead to transformational, sustainable change. The hope is that all educational leaders and teachers who encounter this study can see themselves in it and apply the design principles that emerged to intentionally design our schools and

transform the student learning experience in a way that better prepares our students to become successful citizens in a global society.

Implications for Research

This study contributes to the research on the relationship between school counselor leadership and the development and functioning of collaborative teams. I provide an in-depth look at factors that influence the formation and facilitation of teacher work groups, enhancing our understanding of leadership practices and group processes that lead to effective group decision-making. By identifying these factors, this study contributes to the professional knowledge base on the role that individual, group, and organizational factors play in the dynamics of the development of a planning process. In addition, this study provides a foundation for exploring the ways in which these factors can influence broader educational change.

While this study examines practices and processes associated specifically with the formation and facilitation of a teacher work group, it also provides a window into the function of planning processes more broadly. The factors that influenced the development and functioning of the work group are most likely present at an organizational and institutional level and undoubtedly influence decision-making processes in areas beyond teacher work groups. In particular, the role of the school counselor as leader, when translated into other settings, could provide insights on leadership and decision-making processes on a larger scale in other areas of the organization or institution.

As school counselors refine their approaches to developing and facilitating planning processes, they have little explicit research to draw upon. This dissertation

builds on a robust set of observations, interviews and reflection logs and associates the findings with theory in a manner that both recognizes and extends beyond local context. The methods that were used in this study were helpful when attempting to learn more about the individual practices and group processes that occurred throughout the planning process. Specifically, utilizing triangulation between observations, interviews, and reflection logs was beneficial because I was able to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena while testing the validity through the convergence of information from different sources. Additionally, writing the reflection logs throughout the process was crucial to understanding the findings because it provided insights to my thoughts throughout the process while documenting my observations of the process, descriptions of what was accomplished, reflections on group interactions and my role as the school counselor group facilitator. These methods were helpful, and they contributed to the success of this study while setting the stage for future research in the areas of counselor leadership and collaborative teams.

Future Directions for Research

Due to the scope of this study, there were several areas that were unable to be fully explored. Future research should expand this study to determine if the planning process resulted in an enhanced Flex Period. The purpose of this study was to examine the design of the planning process that would ultimately lead to an enhanced Flex Period, so future research could focus on the Flex Period itself to determine the impact it had on teacher-student relationships. The hope is that the product of the planning process would

lead to transformational, sustainable change; however, future research is needed to determine if this occurred.

Another area of interest for future research would be to study work groups that are formed in different ways. For example, a work group that is formed and facilitated during the school day could function very differently than a group that meets after school hours like the one in this study. SCHS's organizational structure and schedule did not allow for collaboration during the school day. All teacher collaboration had to occur before or after school; therefore, studying a teacher work group that is formed and facilitated in a school that values teacher collaboration and creates time within the school today to foster collaborative learning and decision-making would provide an opportunity for additional research and analysis.

Finally, this study examined a team that was in its infancy. As the school counselor, I formed a brand-new team with teachers who had just started working together in a collaborative way. Although these teachers were colleagues, many of them had not worked together in a group setting that was tasked with decision-making. As a result, relationships and trust were slowly building. Little conflict occurred during the first eight meetings, and sometimes conflict was avoided by both the counselor and the group members. Future research with a work group that has been well-established could be beneficial because the counselor practices, group processes, and design principles may vary considering the difference in relationships and comfort level among group members.

The Future: As I Go Forth as a School Counselor

Conducting this study impacted me in several ways; however, the most notable was the impact on my identity as a school counselor. Prior to this experience, I viewed myself as a leader through my work of advocating for my students and collaborating with various stakeholders to support my students and their needs. These responsibilities required a variety of leadership skills during activities such as leading a meeting, solving problems, and communicating with students, teachers, parents and administrators.

Although I was comfortable being a leader in these traditional counselor situations, I was not comfortable leading a long-term change initiative that involved forming and facilitating a group of committed teachers who were tasked with working together toward a common goal. Many aspects of this endeavor were new to me. I was not only looking at ways to support an individual student on my caseload, but I was working with a group of teachers to find ways to support all 9th grade students in their transition to the high school. The process required me to utilize new leadership skills. I had to step outside of my comfort zone and be willing to fail or find faults in my abilities.

This opportunity changed my identity as a leader within my school. I now see new opportunities for me as a leader as one who can believe in a group of people, communicate that belief, and empower others to work together toward a common goal that could potentially lead to systemic change. Prior to conducting the research, I never envisioned myself as someone who could lead others, particularly a group of colleagues. This endeavor has changed my identity as a school counselor and has given me the

opportunity to see other ways that I can utilize my leadership skills to positively impact my students and my school community. I am beyond grateful for this experience.

REFERENCES CITED

- Achinstein, B. (2002). Conflict amid community: The micropolitics of teacher collaboration. *Teachers College Record*, 104(3), 421–455.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9620.00168>
- Aguilar, E. (2012). The art of facilitating teacher teams. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0730-725X\(01\)00374-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0730-725X(01)00374-5)
- Allen, J., Pianta, R., Gregory, A., Mikami, A., & Lun, J. (2011). An Interaction-Based Approach to Enhancing Secondary School Instruction and Student Achievement. *Science*, 333(6045), 1034–1037. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1207998>.An
- Amatea, E., & Clark, M. (2005). Changing schools, changing counselors: A qualitative study of school administrators' conceptions of the school counselor role. *Professional School Counseling*, 9(1), 16–27.
<https://doi.org/10.5330/prsc.9.1.w6357vn62n5328vp>
- Anderson, T., & Kanuka, H. (1997). On-line forums: New platforms for professional development and group collaboration. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 3(3).
- Argyris, C. (1991). Teaching smart people how to learn. *Harvard Business Review*, 4(2), 4–15.
- Armenakis, A. A., Harris, S. G., & Mossholder, K. W. (1993). Creating readiness for organizational change. *Human Relations*, 46(6), 681–697.
- Baker, S. B., Robichaud, T. A., Westforth Dietrich, V. C., Wells, S. C., & Schreck, R. E. (2009). School counselor consultation: A pathway to advocacy, collaboration, and leadership. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(3), 200–206.
- Baldwin, M. W. (1992). Relational Schemas and the Processing of Social Information. *Psychological Bulletin*, 112(3), 461–484.
- Battistich, V., Solomon, D., Kim, D., Watson, M., & Schaps, E. (1995). Schools as communities, poverty levels of student populations, and students' attitudes, motives, and performance: A multilevel analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 627–658. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003627>
- Bernhardt, V. L. (1999). *The school portfolio: A comprehensive framework for school improvement* (2nd ed.). Larchmont: Eye on Education, Inc.

- Biag, M. (2016). A Descriptive Analysis of School Connectedness: The Views of School Personnel. *Urban Education, 51*(1), 32–59.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085914539772>
- Bion, W. R. (1961). *Experiences in work groups*. New York: Tavistock Publications Limited.
- Blum, R. (2005). *School Connectedness: Improving the Lives of Students*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2006.00129.x>
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2008). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice and leadership* (4th ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brackett, M. A., Reyes, M. R., Rivers, S. E., Elbertson, N. A., & Salovey, P. (2011). Classroom Emotional Climate, Teacher Affiliation, and Student Conduct. *Journal of Classroom Interaction, 46*(1), 27–36.
- Brandt, R. (2003). Is this school a learning organization? *National Staff Development Council, 24*(1), 10–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10106049.2012.668950>
- Brinkworth, M. E., McIntyre, J., Juraschek, A. D., & Gehlbach, H. (2017). Teacher-student relationships: The positives and negatives of assessing both perspectives. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/J.APPDEV.2017.09.002>
- Bryk, A. S., Gomez, L. M., Grunow, A., & LeMahieu, P. G. (2016). *Learning to improve: How America's schools can get better at getting better*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Education Press.
- Bryk, A., & Schneider, B. (2003). Trust in schools: A core resource for school reform. *Educational Leadership, 60*(6), 40–45.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/009430610403300366>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2009). *School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Chapman, R. L., Buckley, L., Sheehan, M., & Shochet, I. M. (2014). Teachers' perceptions of school connectedness and risk-taking in adolescence. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 27*(4), 413–431.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2013.771225>

- Choi, J. (2006). A motivational theory of charismatic leadership: Envisioning, empathy, and empowerment. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 13(1), 24–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10717919070130010501>
- Christenson, S. L., Reschly, A. L., & Wylie, C. (Eds.). (2012). *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement*. Springer. New York: Springer.
- Claessens, L. C. A., van Tartwijk, J., Pennings, H. J. M., van der Want, A. C., Verloop, N., den Brok, P. J., & Wubbels, T. (2016). Beginning and experienced secondary school teachers' self- and student schema in positive and problematic teacher-student relationships. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 55, 88–99.
- Claessens, L. C. A., van Tartwijk, J., van der Want, A. C., Pennings, H. J. M., Verloop, N., den Brok, P. J., & Wubbels, T. (2017). Positive teacher–student relationships go beyond the classroom, problematic ones stay inside. *Journal of Educational Research*, 110(5), 478–493. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2015.1129595>
- Conley, S., Fauske, J., & Pounder, D. G. (2004). Teacher work group effectiveness. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 40(5), 663–703. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X04268841>
- Conner, J. O., Miles, S. B., & Pope, D. C. (2014). How many teachers does it take to support a student? Examining the relationship between teacher support and adverse health outcomes in high-performing, pressure-cooker high schools. *The High School Journal*, 98(1), 22–42. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2014.0012>
- Cornelius-White, J. (2007). Relationships are effective : A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 113–143.
- Costa, A. L., & Kallick, B. (1993). Through the lens of a critical friend. *Educational Leadership*, 51(2), 49–51.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Crosnoe, R., Johnson, M. K., & Elder, G. H. (2004). Intergenerational bonding in school: The behavioral and contextual correlates of student-teacher relationships. *Sociology of Education*, 77, 60–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003804070407700103>
- Crow, G. M., & Pounder, D. G. (2000). Interdisciplinary teacher teams: Context, design, and process. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 36(2), 216–254. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161x00362004>

- Daggett, W. R. (2014). *Reforming American high schools: Why, what, and how*. Rexford, NY: International Center for Leadership in Education.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 8(1), 1–44.
<https://doi.org/10.1038/sj.clp>
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum.
- DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Engels, M. C., Colpin, H., Van Leeuwen, K., Bijttebier, P., Van Den Noortgate, W., Claes, S., ... Verschueren, K. (2016). Behavioral engagement, peer status, and teacher–student relationships in adolescence: A longitudinal study on reciprocal influences. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 45, 1192–1207.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-016-0414-5>
- Ertel, C., & Solomon, L. K. (2014). *Moments of impact: How to design strategic conversations that accelerate change*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Farbman, D. (2012). *The Case for Improving and Expanding Time in Schools: A Review of Key Research and Practice*.
- Farbman, D., & Kaplan, C. (2005). *Time for a change: The Promise of Extended Time Schools for Promoting Student Achievement. Executive Summary*. Boston. Retrieved from
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/202949992?accountid=14549%5Cnhttp://hl5yy6xn2p.search.serialssolutions.com/?genre=article&sid=ProQ:&atitle=Time+for+a+change?&title=Training+Journal&issn=14656523&date=2008-01-01&volume=&issue=&spage=56&author=Ghoorun,+R>
- Forsyth, P. B., Adams, C. M., & Hoy, W. (2011). *Collective trust*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Frymier, A. B., & Houser, M. L. (2000). The teacher-student relationship as an interpersonal relationship. *Communication Education*, 49(3), 207–219.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520009379209>
- Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Fullan, M. (2007). Introduction. In *The jossey-bass reader on educational leadership* (2nd ed., pp. xvii–xix). San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- Fullan, M. (2008). *The six secrets of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gallagher, A., & Thordarson, K. (2018). *Design thinking for school leaders*. Alexandria: ASCD.
- Garmston, R. J. (2007). Collaborative culture. *Journal of Staff Development*, 28(1), 69–70.
- Garmston, R. J., & Wellman, B. M. (2016). *The adaptive school* (3rd ed.). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Gasser, L., Grütter, J., Buholzer, A., & Wettstein, A. (2017). Emotionally supportive classroom interactions and students' perceptions of their teachers as caring and just. *Learning and Instruction*, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2017.08.003>
- Gentry, W. A., & Leslie, J. B. (2007). Competencies for leadership development: What's hot and what's not when assessing leadership - implications for organization development. *Organization Development Journal*, 25(1), 37–46.
- Goodenow, C. (1993). The psychological sense of school membership among adolescents: Scale development and educational correlates. *Psychology in the Schools*, 30, 79–90.
- Graham, P. A. (2005). *Schooling America: How the public schools meet the nation's changing needs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gregory, A., Allen, J. P., Mikami, A. Y., Hafen, C. A., & Pianta, R. C. (2014). Effects of A Professional Development Program on Behavioral Engagement of Students in Middle and High School. *Psychology Scholarship*, 51(2), 143–163. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21741.EFFECTS>
- Gregory, A., & Ripski, M. B. (2008). Adolescent Trust in Teachers: Implications for Behavior in the High School Classroom. *The School Psychology Review*, 37(3), 337–353. Retrieved from <http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com/hww/jumpstart.jhtml?recid=0bc05f7a67b1790eb7a1efb451c29a504e85b6e5ea69c064e89ecb51610a3833d8e004ed39966792&fmt=H%5Ct%5Ct%5Ct%5Ct>
<http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com/hww/jumpstart.jhtml?recid=0bc05f7a67b1790eb7a1efb451c29a504e85b6e5ea>
- Gregory, A., Ruzek, E., Hafen, C. A., Mikami, A. Y., Allen, J. P., & Pianta, R. C. (2017). My Teaching Partner-Secondary: A video-based coaching model. *Theory into Practice*, 56(1), 38–45. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(16\)30265-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(16)30265-0). Cost-effectiveness

- Gross, S. J. (2020). *Applying Turbulence Theory to Educational Leadership in Challenging Times (A Case-Based Approach)*. New York: Routledge.
- Guthrie, J. T., Wigfield, A., & You, W. (2012). Instructional Contexts for Engagement and Achievement in Reading. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement* (pp. 601–634). New York: Springer.
- Hafen, C. A., Hamre, B. K., Allen, J. P., Bell, C. A., Gitomer, D. H., & Pianta, R. C. (2015). Teaching Through Interactions in Secondary School Classrooms: Revisiting the Factor Structure and Practical Application of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System–Secondary. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 35(5–6), 651–680.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431614537117>
- Hammar Chiriac, E. (2008). A scheme for understanding group processes in problem-based learning. *Higher Education*, 55, 505–518. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-007-9071-7>
- Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (2005). Can Instructional and Emotional Support in the First-Grade Classroom Make a Difference for Children at Risk of School Failure? *Child Development*, 76(5), 949–967. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3696607>?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents <http://about.jstor.org/terms>
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Holmes, K., Clement, J., & Albright, J. (2013). The complex task of leading educational change in schools. *School Leadership and Management*, 33(3), 270–283.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2013.800477>
- Horan, S. M., Houser, M. L., Goodboy, A. K., & Frymier, A. B. (2011). Students' Early Impressions of Instructors: Understanding the Role of Relational Skills and Messages. *Communication Research Reports*, 28(1), 74–85.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2011.541362>
- House, R. M., & Hayes, R. L. (2002). School conselous: Becoming key players in school reform. *Professional School Counseling*, 5(4), 249–256.
- Howells, K. (2014). An exploration of the role of gratitude in enhancing teacher–student relationships. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 42, 58–67.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/J.TATE.2014.04.004>

- Hughes, J. N., Wu, J.-Y., Kwok, O., Villarreal, V., & Johnson, A. Y. (2012). Indirect effects of child reports of teacher–student relationship on achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 104*(2), 350–365. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026339>
- IDEO. (2012). Design thinking for educators toolkit. *IDEO LLC*. IDEO. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-13757-0>
- Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The Prosocial Classroom: Teacher Social and Emotional Competence in Relation to Student and Classroom Outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*. American Educational Research Association. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40071173>
- Joyce, B. R., & Showers, B. (2002). *Student achievement through staff development* (3rd ed.). Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2014.883709>
- Kellett, J. B., Humphrey, R. H., & Sleeth, R. G. (2002). Empathy and complex task performance: Two routes to leadership. *Leadership Quarterly, 13*, 523–544. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843\(02\)00142-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(02)00142-X)
- Klem, A. M., & Connell, J. P. (2004). Linking teacher support to student engagement and achievement. *Journal of School Health, 74*(7), 262–274.
- Kolbert, E. (2017). Why facts don't change our minds. *The New Yorker*, 1–21.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2007). The five practices of exemplary leadership. In *The jossey-bass reader on educational leadership* (2nd ed., pp. 63–72). San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Kruse, S., Louis, K. S., & Bryk, A. (1994). Building professional community in schools. *Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools*.
- Lam, S., Wong, B. P. H., Yang, H., & Liu, Y. (2012). Understanding Student Engagement with a Contextual Model. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement* (pp. 403–419). New York: Springer.
- Lewis, R. E., & Borunda, R. (2006). Lived stories: Participatory leadership in school counseling. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 84*(4), 406–413. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2006.tb00424.x>

- Linnenbrink-Garcia, L., & Patall, E. A. (2016). Motivation. In L. Corno & E. M. Anderman (Eds.), *Handbook of Educational Psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 91–103). New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- MacNeil, A. J., Prater, D. L., & Busch, S. (2009). The effects of school culture and climate on student achievement. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *12*(1), 73–84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603120701576241>
- Malecki, C. K., & Demaray, M. K. (2003). What Type of Support Do They Need? Investigating Student Adjustment as Related to Emotional, Informational, Appraisal, and Instrumental Support. *School Psychology Quarterly*, *18*(3), 231–252. <https://doi.org/10.1521/scpq.18.3.231.22576>
- McMahon, H. G., Mason, E. C. M., & Paisley, P. O. (2009). School counselor educators as educational leaders promoting systemic change. *Professional School Counseling*, *13*(2), 116–124.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mikami, A. Y., Gregory, A., Allen, J. P., Pianta, R. C., & Lun, J. (2011). Effects of a Teacher Professional Development Intervention on Peer Relationships in Secondary Classrooms. *School Psychology Review*, *40*(3), 367–385. Retrieved from <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.libproxy.temple.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=85f2786d-c5f4-44e0-aa67-1755c2b78e88%40sessionmgr4008>
- Mintrop, R. (2016). *Design-based school improvement: A practical guide for education leaders*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Education Press.
- Mroz, J. E., Allen, J. A., Verhoeven, D. C., & Shuffler, M. L. (2018). Do we really need another meeting? The science of workplace meetings. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *27*(6), 484–491. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721418776307>
- Muller, C. (2001). The Role of Caring in the Teacher-Student Relationship for At-Risk Students. *Sociological Inquiry*, *71*(2), 241–255.
- Muller, C., Katz, S. R., & Dance, L. J. (1999). Investing in Teaching and Learning: Dynamics of the Teacher-Student Relationship From Each Actor ' s Perspective. *Urban Education*, *34*(3), 292–337.
- Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

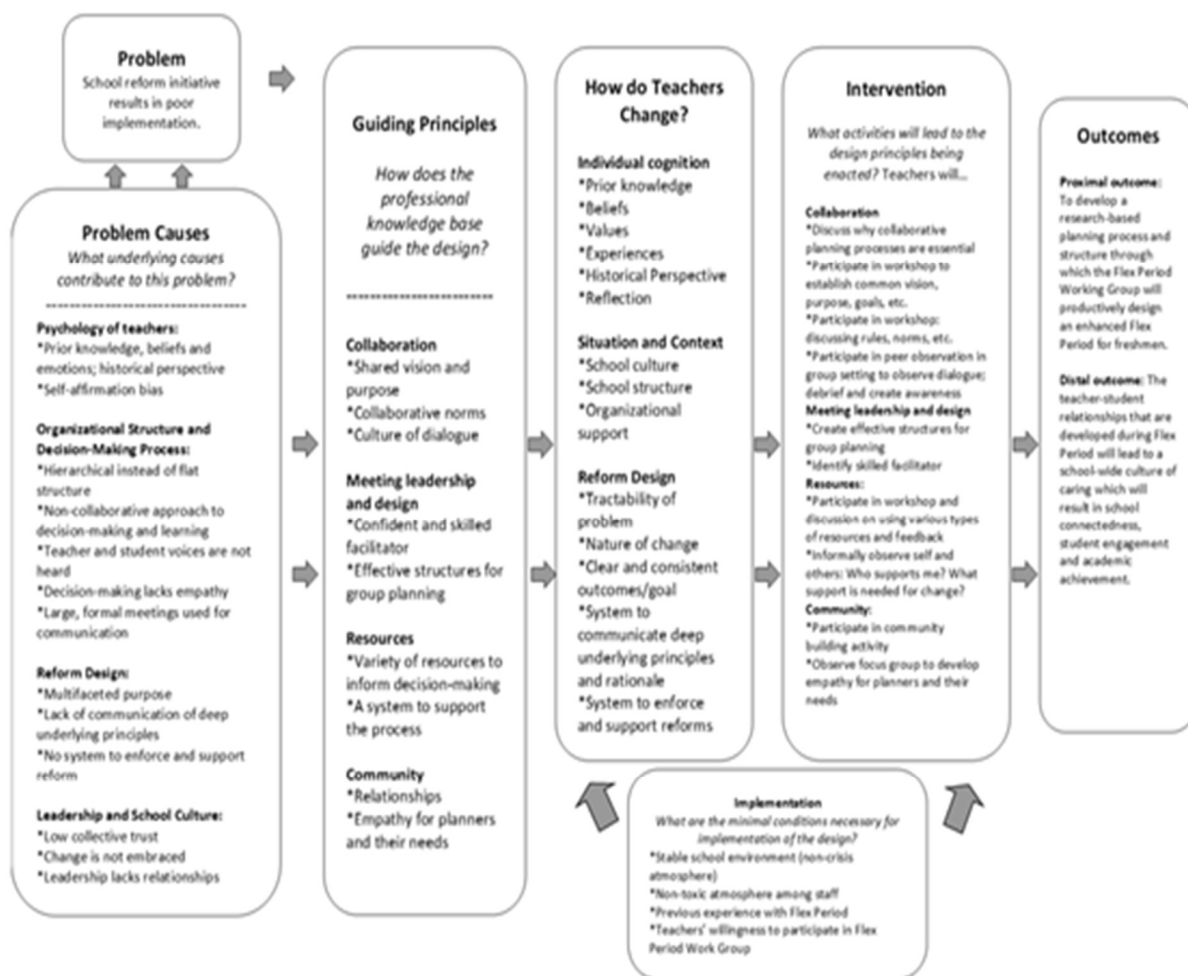
- Pennings, H. J. M., Brekelmans, M., Sadler, P., Claessens, L. C. A., Van Der Want, A. C., & Van Tartwijk, J. (2017). Interpersonal adaptation in teacher-student interaction. *Learning and Instruction*.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2017.09.005>
- Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., & Allen, J. P. (2012). Teacher-student relationships and engagement: Conceptualizing, measuring, and improving the capacity of classroom interactions. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 365–386). New York: Springer.
- Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., & Mintz, S. (2012). Classroom assessment scoring system: Secondary manual.
- Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B., & Stuhlman, M. (2003). Relationships between teachers and children. In W. M. Reynolds, G. E. Miller, & I. B. Weiner (Eds.), *Handbook of psychology* (pp. 199–234). Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/005401>
- Platt, A. D., Tripp, C. E., Fraser, R. G., Warnock, J. R., & Curtis, R. E. (2008). *The skillful leader II: Transforming ineffective teams*. Acton, MA: Ready About Press.
- process. (2018). Retrieved November 18, 2018, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/process>
- Quin, D. (2017). Longitudinal and Contextual Associations Between Teacher–Student Relationships and Student Engagement: A Systematic Review. *Review of Educational Research*, 87(2), 345–387. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316669434>
- Reeve, J. (2006). Teachers as Facilitators: What Autonomy-Supportive Teachers Do and Why Their Students Benefit. *The Elementary School Journal*, 106(3), 225–236.
 Retrieved from
<http://web.a.ebscohost.com.libproxy.temple.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=4d0961f8-6e81-4a86-94a3-5ddb375f6730%40sessionmgr4009>
- Reeves, D. B. (2009). *Leading change in your school*. Alexandria: ASCD.
- Resnick, M. D., Bearman, P. S., Blum, R. W., Bauman, K. E., Harris, K. M., Jones, J., ... Udry, J. R. (1997). Protecting adolescents from harm: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health. *Jama*, 278(10), 823–832.
- Roorda, D. L., Koomen, H. M. Y., Spilt, J. L., & Oort, F. J. (2011). The influence of affective teacher-student relationships on students' school engagement and achievement: A meta-analytic approach. *Review of Educational Research*. American Educational Research Association. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41408670>

- Russell, S. L., Wentzel, K. R., & Donlan, A. E. (2016). Teachers' beliefs about the development of teacher–adolescent trust. *Learning Environments Research*, 19, 241–266. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-016-9207-8>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-1042-6_4
- Shapiro, J. P., & Stefkovich, J. A. (2011). *Ethical leadership and decision making in education: Applying theoretical perspectives to complex dilemmas* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Sheninger, E. C., & Murray, T. C. (2017). *Learning transformed*. Alexandria: ASCD.
- Shields, C. M., Dollarhide, C. T., & Young, A. A. (2018). Transformative leadership in school counseling: An emerging paradigm for equity and excellence. *Professional School Counseling*, 21(1b), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759x18773581>
- Skinner, E. A., & Pitzer, J. R. (2012). Developmental Dynamics of Student Engagement, Coping, and Everyday Resilience. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement* (pp. 21–44). New York: Springer.
- Spillane, J. P., Reiser, B. J., & Reimer, T. (2002). Policy implementation and cognition: Reframing and refocusing implementation research. *Review of Educational Research*, 72(3), 387–431. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543072003387>
- Steiner, I. D. (1972). *Group process and productivity*. New York: Academic Press.
- Stewart, E. B. (2008). School structural characteristics, student effort, peer associations, and parental involvement: The influence of school- and individual-level factors on academic achievement. *Education and Urban Society*, 40(2), 179–204. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124507304167>
- Tarlow, B. J. (1996). Caring: A negotiated process that varies. In S. Gordon, P. Benner, & N. Noddings (Eds.), *Caregiving: Readings in knowledge, practice, ethics and politics* (pp. 56–82). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Venables, D. R. (2018). *Facilitating teacher teams and authentic PLCs: The human side of leading people, protocols, and practices*. Alexandria: ASCD.
- Westheimer, J. (1999). Communities and consequences: An inquiry into ideology and practice in teachers' professional work. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(1), 71–105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00131619921968473>

- Yonezawa, S., McClure, L., & Jones, M. (2012). *Personalization in Schools. Jobs for the Future*. Boston.
- Young, A., Dollarhide, C. T., & Baughman, A. (2015). The voices of school counselors: Essential characteristics of school counselor leaders. *Professional School Counseling, 19*(1), 36–45. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>
- Ziegler, B., & Ramage, D. (2017). *Future focused leaders*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin.

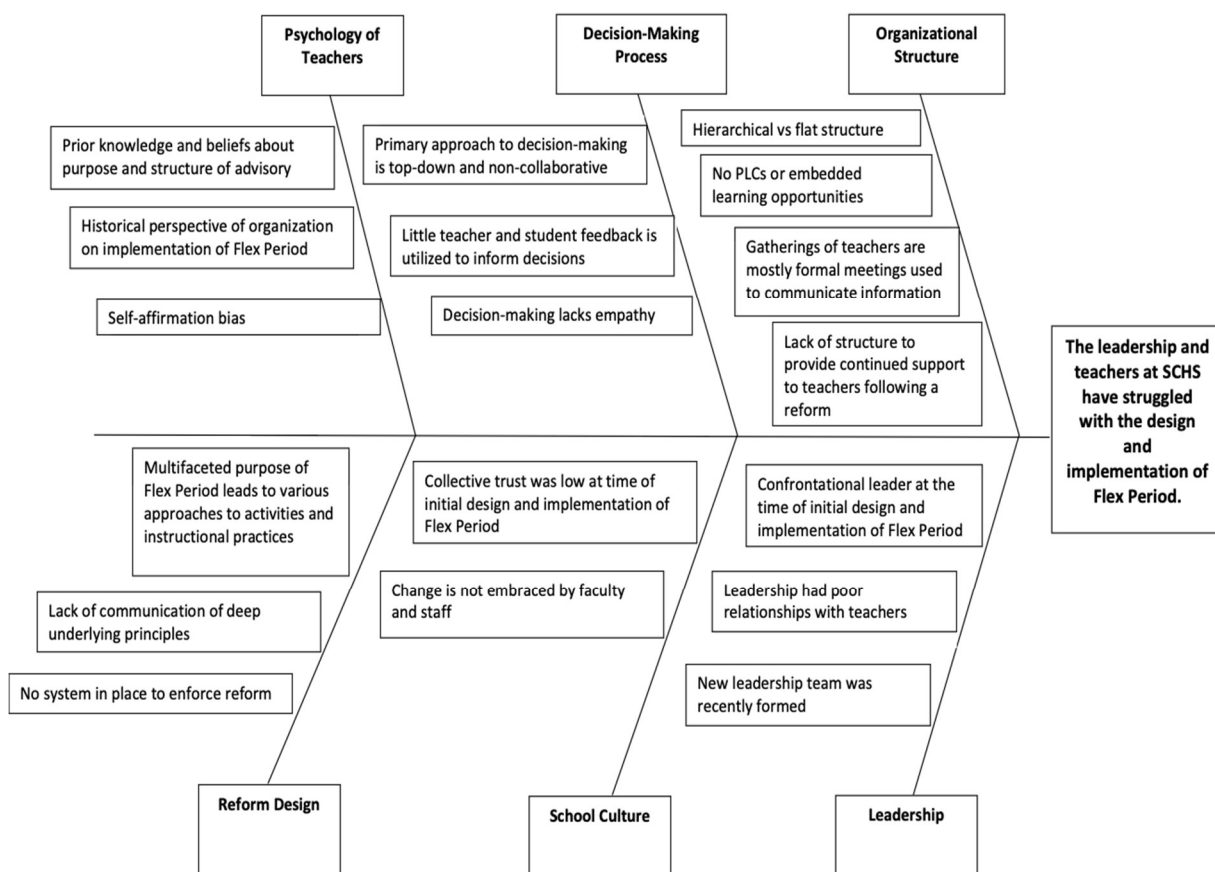
APPENDIX A

THEORY OF ACTION



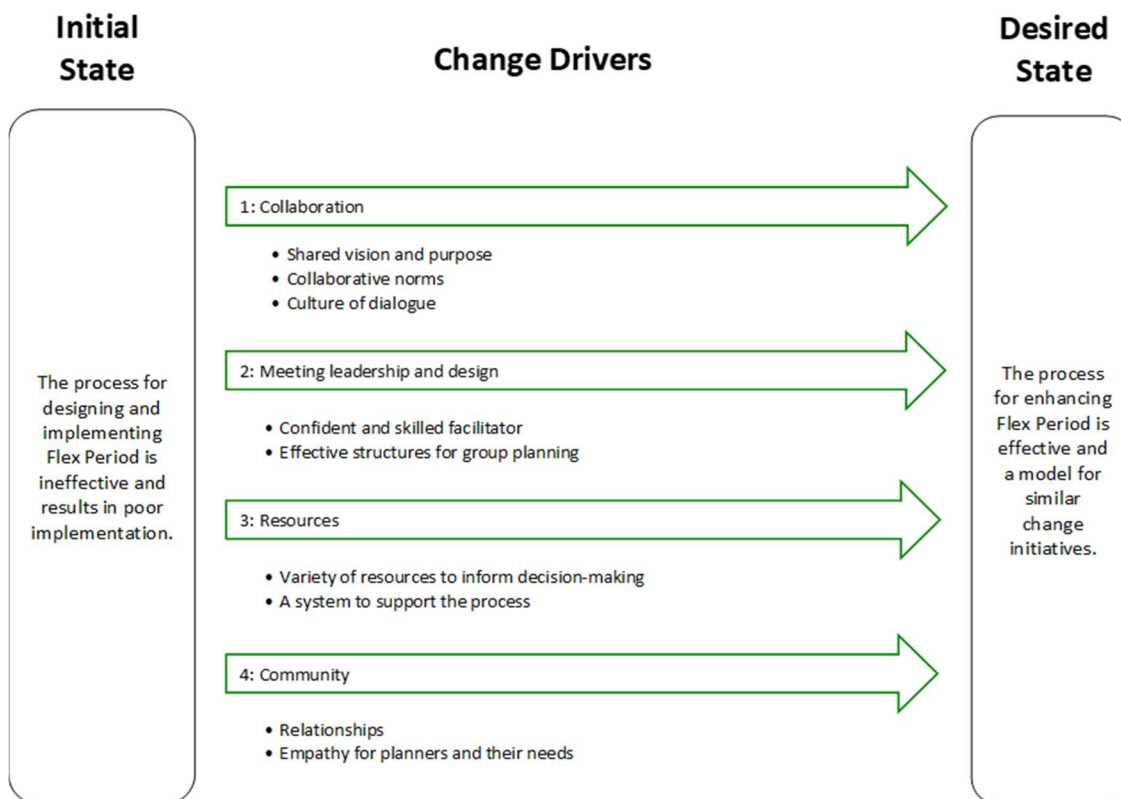
APPENDIX B

FISHBONE DIAGRAM



APPENDIX C

CHANGE DRIVERS



APPENDIX D

INTERVENTION SESSIONS

Session	Format	Content
1	Workshop and discussion	<p>Reflecting on Flex Period: What have you noticed about Flex Period?</p> <p>Discussing focusing questions: Who are we? Why are we doing this? Why are we doing this this way?</p> <p>Presenting evidence from research to demonstrate that collaborative planning processes are effective</p> <p>Establishing common vision, purpose, goals and timeline</p>
2	Workshop and discussion	<p>Participating in community building activity</p> <p>Getting organized: discussing norms, rules, protocols, mutual support, accountability</p>
3	Focus Group and Inquiry	<p>Talking with teachers to discuss their needs and brainstorming ways to improve collaborative planning processes;</p> <p>Debriefing and creating awareness on needs of teachers</p>
4	Peer Observation	<p>Observing peers in a group setting to observe dialogue</p> <p>Debriefing and creating awareness on culture of dialogue and use of protocols</p>
5	Workshop and discussion	Using various resources and types of feedback to inform decision-making
6	Inquiry	<p>Creating awareness on reform support and enforcement</p> <p>Informally observing self and others: Who supports me? Whom do I support? What support is needed for sustained change?</p>
7	Workshop	Planning process for Flex Period enhancement is planned

APPENDIX E

WORK GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Participant Code	Participant Name (Pseudonym)	Demographics	Group Role	Grade Level	Position/ Department	Wildcat Period Grade	Number of Meetings Attended	Participating Next Year
P1	Kate	White Female	Withdrew	9	Teacher/Math	9	1	Unknown
P2	Trent	White Male	Member	9-12	Teacher/Science	9	8	Yes
P3	Elaine	White Female	Member	9	Teacher/Math	12	5	No
P4	Lillian	White Female	Member	9-12	Teacher/Science	11	5	Undecided
P5	Chris	White Male	Admin	9-12	Assistant Principal/ Administration	n/a	6	Yes
P6	Bret	White Male	Member	11-12	Teacher/History	9	6	Undecided
P7	Catherine	White Female	Teacher Leader	10-12	Teacher/English	10	6	Undecided
P8	Mary	White Female	Member	9	Teacher/Science	11	5	Yes
P9	Franklin	White Male	Member	9	Teacher/Math	11	0	Unknown
P10	Laryn	White Female	Withdrew	10	Teacher/History	9	1	Unknown
P11	Nora	White Female	Note Taker	9	Teacher/History	9	6	Yes
P12	Cal	White Male	Member	9-12	School Counselor (Department Head)/ Counseling	n/a	5	Yes
P13	Lindsay	White Female	Critical Friend	9-12	School Counselor/ Counseling	n/a	0	Unknown

APPENDIX F

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire assesses your perceptions about the change process and collaborative teams in your high school.

This questionnaire contains a number of statements about practices, which may or may not occur in your school.

Read each statement and then individually assign a rating to each indicator below using the following scale:

- 1 Absent or rarely part of our practice.
- 2 Occasional part of our practice.
- 3 Embedded and regular part of our practice.

Be sure to select only one response for each statement.

Shared and Supportive Leadership

- Decision-making takes place through committees or collaborative teams of teachers.
- Teachers assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority.
- Opportunities are provided to staff to initiate change.
- Teachers in the school frequently come together to solve problems and brainstorm innovative ideas.
- Leadership is promoted and nurtured among staff.
- The principal incorporates advice from staff to make decisions.
- The principal participates democratically with staff sharing power and authority
- The staff is consistently involved in discussing and making decisions about most school issues.
- The principal shares responsibility and rewards for innovative actions.

Collaboration

- Collaborative teams establish a shared vision and purpose.
- The shared vision and purpose of the teams are related to the school-wide goals and objectives.
- Teams develop a set of values that are shared by all team members.
- Teams develop and post norms of interaction and periodically monitor how well they are honoring those norms.
- Teams frequently engage in professional dialogue.
- Team dialoguing is valued among the team members because they find that they come to common understandings when they voice their points of view.
- Team members participate equally in group dialogue; there are no “dominators” or “hibernators” in the group.
- Inter-professional disagreements occur regularly – these disagreements are welcomed, openly addressed and lead to new shared understandings.

APPENDIX F (CONTINUED)**PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE****Meeting Leadership and Design**

- ___ There is time allotted for teacher collaboration.
- ___ Teachers across grade levels and departments are involved in planning and decision-making.
- ___ Teams have a meeting space that is conducive to face-to-face conversations and contains appropriate materials to support collaboration.
- ___ A confident and skilled facilitator is selected for the team.
- ___ Team meetings are purposefully facilitated and employ the use of protocols to structure and guide dialogue.
- ___ Meeting agendas are consistently well prepared (and communicated) in advance.

Resources

- ___ Teams regularly make decisions about instructional practices to initiate, maintain, develop or discontinue.
- ___ Teams regularly determine what information needs to be obtained to inform decision-making.
- ___ All decisions are informed by group dialogue.
- ___ Teams are comfortable with discussing data.
- ___ Team members frequently make classroom visits to observe peers to inform their decision-making.
- ___ Team members seek out opportunities to learn from experts.
- ___ The process of making any decision is transparent and adhered to – everyone knows that the decisions are/were and how and why they were made.
- ___ The decisions that are made are clearly and directly related to the improvement of instructional practice and the improvement of student learning.
- ___ The school has and uses systems for assessing and supporting group work.

Community

- ___ Teams establish a sense of trust among team members.
- ___ Teams members respect each other.
- ___ Teams members are open and honest with each other.
- ___ Team members develop a deep empathy and understanding of needs and motivations of people.
- ___ Teams seek out opportunities to listen to their stakeholders.

APPENDIX G

RUBRIC: COLLABORATIVE PLANNING PROCESS

Rubric: Collaborative Planning Process

Shared and Supportive Leadership		
2	1	0
Decision-making takes place through committees or collaborative teams of teachers.	Decision-making sometimes takes place through committees or collaborative teams of teachers.	Top-down decision-making is utilized; teachers are not consulted, and their voices are not heard.
Teachers assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority.	Teachers sometimes assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning.	Teachers rarely or never assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning.
Opportunities are provided to staff to initiate change.	Staff is consulted when a change initiative is underway.	Staff is not involved in change initiatives.
Teachers in the school frequently come together to solve problems and brainstorm innovative ideas.	Teachers in the school sometimes come together to solve problems and brainstorm innovative ideas.	Teachers in the school rarely or never come together to solve problems and brainstorm innovative ideas.
The principal incorporates advice from all staff to make decisions.	The principal incorporates advice from a select group of staff to make decisions.	The principal rarely or never incorporates advice from staff to make decisions.
The principal participates democratically with staff sharing power and authority.	The principal consults with a select group of staff to inform his/her decision-making.	The principal has individual control over all decisions and receives little input from staff.
The staff is consistently involved in discussing and making decisions about most school issues.	The staff is sometimes involved in discussing and making decisions about most school issues.	The staff is rarely or never involved in discussing and making decisions about most school issues.
The principal shares responsibility and rewards for innovative actions.	The principal sometimes shares responsibility and rewards for innovative actions.	The principal rarely or never shares responsibility and rewards for innovative actions.

Collaboration		
2	1	0
Collaborative teams establish a shared vision and purpose.	Collaborative teams discuss a shared vision and purpose, but they do not finalize them or find them necessary.	Collaborative teams do not discuss or establish a shared vision or purpose.
The shared vision and purpose of the teams are related to the school-wide goals and objectives.	The shared vision and purpose of the teams are established, but they are not related to school-wide goals and objectives.	No shared vision or purpose of the teams are established.
Teams develop a set of values that are shared by all team members.	Team members discuss shared values, but they do not develop a set of values that are shared by all team members.	Teams rarely or never discuss or develop a set of values that are shared by all team members.
Teams develop and post norms of interaction and periodically monitor how well they are honoring those norms.	Teams sometimes post norms of interaction and monitor how well they are honoring those norms.	Teams rarely or never post norms of interactions.
Teams frequently engage in professional dialogue.	Teams sometimes engage in professional dialogue.	Teams rarely or never engage in professional dialogue.
Team dialoguing is valued among the team members because they find that they come to common understandings when they voice their points of view.	Team dialoguing is tolerated, but some team members do not find value in it or are hesitant to voice their points of view.	Team dialoguing is not valued among the team members, and most would prefer to work independently.
Team members participate equally in group dialogue; there are no "dominators" or "hibernators" in the group.	Most team members contribute to the dialogue, but there are "hibernators" and "dominators."	Dialogue is almost convivial, or members tend to "dominate" or "hibernate."
Inter-professional disagreements occur regularly – these disagreements are welcomed, openly addressed and lead to new shared understandings.	Inter-professional disagreements occur sometimes – tension surrounds these disagreements, and they may go unresolved.	Inter-professional disagreements do not exist, or they exist and go unresolved.

APPENDIX G (CONTINUED)

RUBRIC: COLLABORATIVE PLANNING PROCESS

Meeting Leadership and Design		
2	1	0
There is time allotted for teacher collaboration.	Some time is allotted for teacher collaboration.	Little to no time is allotted for teacher collaboration.
Teachers across grade levels and departments are involved in planning and decision-making.	A select group of teachers are involved in planning and decision-making.	Few to no teachers are involved in planning and decision-making.
Teams have a meeting space that is conducive to face-to-face conversations and contains appropriate materials to support collaboration.	Teams meet in any available space within the school, and they utilize the materials that are present.	Teams have difficulty finding an appropriate space and materials that are supportive of collaboration.
A confident and skilled facilitator is selected for the team.	A facilitator is sometimes selected for the team.	A facilitator is rarely or never selected for the team.
Team meetings are purposefully facilitated and employ the use of protocols to structure and guide dialogue.	Team meetings are facilitated with little planning or thought, and they sometimes use protocols to structure and guide dialogue.	Team meetings are facilitated haphazardly, and they rarely or never use protocols to structure and guide dialogue.
Meeting agendas are consistently well prepared (and communicated) in advance.	Meeting agendas are sometimes well prepared (and communicated) in advance.	Meeting agendas are rarely or never prepared (and communicated) in advance.

Community		
2	1	0
Teams establish a sense of trust among team members.	Teams members are hopeful but have doubts about the level of trust among team members.	Team members do not trust each other and are unwilling to participate fully.
Teams members respect each other.	Team members lack full respect for each other, but their actions remain civil.	Team members are disrespectful toward each other.
Teams members are open and honest with each other.	Team members are guarded when communicating with each other.	Team members keep their true opinions to themselves.
Team members develop a deep empathy and understanding of needs and motivations of people.	Team members sometimes consider the needs of others, but they often put themselves first.	Team members rarely or never consider the needs of others.
Teams seek out opportunities to listen to their stakeholders.	Teams sometimes seek out opportunities to listen to their stakeholders.	Teams rarely or never seek out opportunities to listen to their stakeholders.

Resources		
2	1	0
Teams regularly determine what information needs to be obtained to inform decision-making.	Teams sometimes use information to inform decision-making.	Teams make decisions without
All decisions are informed by group dialogue.	Most decisions are informed by team dialogue.	Decisions are not typically informed by dialogue in team meetings.
Teams are comfortable with discussing data.	Teams have a moderate level of comfort with discussing data.	Teams rarely or never discuss data.
Team members frequently make classroom visits to observe peers to inform their decision-making.	Team members sometimes make classroom visits to observe peers to inform their decision-making.	Teams rarely or never make classroom visits to observe peers to inform their decision-making.
Team members seek out opportunities to learn from experts.	Team members sometimes seek out opportunities to learn from experts.	Team members rarely or never seek out opportunities to learn from experts.
The process of making any decision is transparent and adhered to – everyone knows what the decisions are/were and how and why they were made.	The process for making decisions is informal; most team members know what the decisions are/were and how and why they were made.	A decision-making process does not exist or is not transparent; few members know what the decisions are/were and how and why they were made.
Decisions that are made are clearly and directly related to the improvement of instructional practice and the improvement of student learning.	Decisions are tangentially related to the improvement of practice and the improvement of student learning.	Decisions are not made, or do not relate to the improvement of practice and the improvement of student learning.
The school has and uses systems for assessing and supporting group work.	The school appears to support collaboration, but there are no systems for assessing or supporting group work.	The school does not have or use systems for assessing and supporting group work.

APPENDIX H

CODES

Counselor Action

- Relationship building
- Empathizing
- Facilitating/Planning
- Responding to group experience

Counselor Experience

- Counselor approach to change
 - Counselor perspective on change process
 - Counselor emotion
 - Counselor identity
- Counselor skills
 - Planning
 - Communicating
 - Relationship building
 - Expressing gratitude

Group Member Action: Interpersonal Interactions

- Relationship building with peers
- Leading others
- Engaging in conflict
- Empathizing

Group Member Action: Meeting Communication

- Dialoguing
- Decision-making
- Reflecting

Group Member Characteristics

- Dedicated members with shared purpose
- Diverse members

Group Member Experience

- Group member approach to change
 - Perspective on change process
 - Emotion
- Group member skills
 - Data collecting
 - Planning
 - Relationship Building
 - Empathizing
 - Reflecting

APPENDIX I

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of research: Designing for a Change: How a School Counselor Forms and Facilitates a Teacher Work Group that Aims to Promote Desirable Teacher-Student Relationships

Investigator and Department: Dr. John Hall, College of Education, Department of Policy, Organizational and Leadership Studies

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

We invite you to take part in a research study because you are a teacher or administrator at SCHS.

What should I know about this research?

- Someone will explain this research to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Who can I talk to about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, contact Alison Wabnik at 2832 Bradley Ave, Dallastown, PA 17313, alison.wabnik@gmail.com, 717-495-9150.

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board. You may talk to them at (215) 707-3390 or e-mail them at: irb@temple.edu for any of the following:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Why is this research being done?

Improving education is one of the foremost concerns in America; however, change can be difficult. Educational leaders play a critical role in creating change in schools. Effective leadership practices and collaborative processes that lead to change are important because transformational, sustainable change rarely occurs through top-down mandates or directives. The research on school counselors leading collaborative change efforts is very limited, and the behaviors and characteristics of counselors that influence the formation and facilitation of teacher teams have not been studied. This study examines how a school counselor forms and facilitates a teacher work group that aims to support the formation of desirable teacher-student relationships. To support the work group and planning process, the school counselor will develop a series of meetings in which design will be used by the work group to redesign a period of the day called Flex Period.

APPENDIX I (CONTINUED)
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

How long will I be in this research?

We expect that you will be in this research for approximately two to three months.

What happens if I agree to be in this research?

As a participant in this research study, you will be a member of a work group that will design a planning process to enhance a period of the day. You will meet with a small group of teachers at Dallastown Area High School for approximately seven one-hour sessions to brainstorm, dialogue and plan. You may be asked to complete a questionnaire or participate in one-on-one interviews to share information about your beliefs, attitudes and practices in regard to the planning process and your participation in the work group.

Is there any way being in this research could be bad for me?

A potential risk would be revealing your identity or sharing confidential information that was collected during the study. Because the study takes place in a group setting, I cannot control what other participants share outside of the study; however, many steps will be taken during data collection to protect your privacy and maintain confidentiality.

Will being in this research help me in any way?

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from taking part in this research. However, possible benefits include gaining a sense of empowerment by contributing to a project that could potentially improve a program at your school. In addition, 9th grade students could benefit from your participation in the work group if the outcome improves the design of Flex Period for freshmen and their transition to high school.

What happens to the information collected for this research?

To the extent allowed by law, we limit the viewing of your personal information to people who have to review it. We cannot promise complete secrecy. The IRB, Temple University, and other representatives of these organizations may inspect and copy your information. Also, if you reveal any information regarding abuse or neglect of a child, the information will have to be disclosed to the appropriate authorities.

APPENDIX J

LIST OF AGENDA TOPICS

Meeting Number	Meeting Date	Agenda Topics, Processes, and Outcomes
1	March 26, 2019	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connecting - Pair-Share: Forge and strengthen relationships. 2. Background - Discussion: Identify challenges of Flex Period and needs of 9th grade students. 3. Overview of Project - Discussion: Articulate common purpose and goals of the group. 4. Work Group Organization - Discussion: Describe who we are as a group; begin to organize ourselves as a group. 5. Group Process - Discussion: Refine our ability to collaboratively plan. 6. Reflection - +/Δ: Group feedback 7. Evaluation/Informed Consent
2	April 2, 2019	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connecting - Pair-Share: Forge and strengthen relationships; establish shared purpose. 2. Understanding the Challenge - Discussion: Identify the problem; reframe the problem into an opportunity. 3. Analyzing the Problem - Small Group Protocol: Identify current needs of our 9th grade students. 4. Building our Team - Discussion: Define and select group roles. 5. Reflecting - +/Δ: Refine our ability to collaboratively plan. 6. Calendar - Discussion: Select date for next meeting.
3	April 16, 2019	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connecting - Pair-Share: Forge and strengthen relationships; identify what we already know about the challenge; discover what we don't already know. 2. Understanding the Challenge - Small Group Discussion: Describe Flex Period; Identify supportive and unsupportive characteristics/features of Flex Period. 3. Planning the Project - Discussion: Develop an understanding of Design Thinking and the Design Process; create a project plan. 4. Building our Team - Index Cards: Brainstorm a list of group norms. 5. Reflecting - +/Δ: Refine our ability to collaboratively plan. 6. Calendar - Discussion: Select dates for the meetings in May.
4	April 30, 2019	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connecting - Pair-Share: Forge and strengthen relationships. 2. Understanding the Challenge - Discussion: Review what we already know about the challenge. 3. Defining Our Audience - Discussion: Create a map of people involved with our topic. 4. Understanding the Challenge - 3-2-1 Plus 1: Identify questions to guide our research. 5. Building Our Team - Index Cards: Brainstorm a list of group norms. 6. Reflecting - +/Δ: Refine our ability to collaboratively plan.
5	May 7, 2019	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connecting - Pair-Share: Forge and strengthen relationships. 2. Building Our Team - Discussion: Select group norms. 3. Understanding the Challenge - 3-2-1: Review key ideas and questions. 4. Developing the Plan - Discussion: Review short-term goals; develop a plan to achieve goals. 5. Preparing Research and Presentation - Small groups: Create presentation for faculty; develop questionnaire for 9th graders; prepare research for next year. 6. Reflecting - +/Δ: Refine our ability to collaboratively plan.
6	May 21, 2019	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connecting - Pair-Share: Forge and strengthen relationships. 2. Building Our Team - Discussion: Review group norms. 3. Preparing Presentation - Discussion: Create presentation for faculty. 4. Preparing Research - Small groups: Develop questionnaire for 9th graders; prepare research for next year. 5. Reflecting - +/Δ: Refine our ability to collaboratively plan.
7	May 28, 2019	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connecting - Pair-Share: Forge and strengthen relationships. 2. Preparing Questionnaire - Discussion: Review questions; confirm plans for distributing questionnaire. 3. Preparing Presentation - Discussion: Review presentation for faculty; confirm plans for presenting to faculty. 4. Preparing Research - Graffiti Brainstorming and Discussion: Identify sources of inspiration; select research participants. 5. Reflecting - Index Cards: Refine our ability to collaboratively plan.
8	June 4, 2019	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connecting - Round Robin: Forge and strengthen relationships. 2. Reviewing Questionnaire Results - Discussion: Review questionnaire results. 3. Preparing Presentation - Discussion: Review presentation for faculty; confirm plans for presenting to faculty. 4. Reflecting - +/Δ: Refine our ability to collaboratively plan.

APPENDIX K

SAMPLE AGENDA

Wildcat Period Work Group

Together We Can Do Great Things

Tuesday, March 26, 2019 3:05 pm - 4:05 pm

Dallastown Area High School, Room 107

Session Goals

- Develop relationships with one another
- Develop a common understanding of what we are working towards
- Begin to build our team

#	Topic	Process	Outcomes/Questions	Time	Duration
Snacks --- Welcome				2:50-3:05	15 min.
1	Connecting	• Pair-Share	• Forge and strengthen relationships	3:05-3:10	5 min.
2	Background	• Discussion	• Identify challenges of Wildcat Period and needs of 9th grade students	3:10-3:15	5 min.
3	Overview of Project	• Discussion	• Articulate common purpose and goals of the group	3:15-3:25	10 min.
4	Work Group Organization	• Discussion	• Describe who we are as a group • Begin to organize ourselves as a group	3:25-3:40	15 min.
5	Group Process	• Discussion	• Refine our ability to collaboratively plan	3:40-3:45	5 min.
6	Reflection	• +/-Δ	• Group feedback	3:45-3:50	5 min.
7	Evaluation / Informed Consent	• Questionnaire • Informed Consent	• Questionnaire feedback • Informed Consent	3:50-4:05	15 min.

APPENDIX L

THEMES

Theme	Counselor Experience	Group Members' Experience	Outcomes
Planning and Facilitating	Counselor focused on group process, including guiding principles, culture of dialogue, effective structures for group planning, group norms, meeting purpose and outcomes	Group members initially did not see value in certain structures, but came to embrace structures when they realized the value	*Building skills *Motivating members to participate in collaborative change efforts
Securing Administrative Support	Counselor found administrative support to be an Integral feature of initial planning for counselor because it was necessary for investment and buy-in	Group members initially were uncomfortable with administrative participation due to past experiences, but relationships and confidence grew, and they realized administrative support was needed for decision-making	*Building skills *Motivating members to participate in collaborative change efforts
Growing Teacher Leadership	Counselor requested volunteers for leadership roles within group and responded to group experience by supporting emergent leaders	Trent emerged as leader which exemplified spirit of the group	*Building skills *Motivating members to participate in collaborative change efforts
Building relationships	Counselor built relationships with administration and peers	Relationships with counselor and group members resulted in group cohesion, open and honest communication, empathy, trust, and emergent leadership	*Building skills *Motivating members to participate in collaborative change efforts
Empathizing	Counselor planned for fear of change which impacted meeting design and setting. Counselor also helped group members engage in their own empathy which helped with relationship building and increased comfort level	Empathizing with other stakeholders helped to address fear of change and plan for buy-in to the process. Empathizing with other group members helped to build relationships and become more aware of other's experiences in the large building.	*Building skills *Motivating members to participate in collaborative change efforts
Reflecting	Counselor responded to group experience which impacted meeting design, group facilitation, emergent leadership, and voice	Group members engaged in a Plus/Delta activity at the end of each meeting which gave them voice. They eventually embraced the practice when they found value in the result, and some began to utilize reflection in their own classrooms	*Building skills *Motivating members to participate in collaborative change efforts
Expressing Gratitude	Counselor discovered the power of gratitude by realizing that it has a positive impact on the group leader as well as group members	Counselor expressed gratitude to group members which motivated them to participate and helped them to feel valued	*Building skills *Motivating members to participate in collaborative change efforts
Engaging in Conflict	Counselor avoided conflict and tried to be inclusive and welcoming to all stakeholders.	Little conflict occurred within the group. Group members avoided conflict when possible. When conflicting statements were made, no dialogue occurred.	Perhaps the lack of conflict discouraged some group members from sharing differing points of view.