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Final Report for the research paper presentation at the ATE 2014 Annual Meeting in St. Louis, Mo (February 14 – 18, 2014)

A. The paper entitled "Creating Generative, Sustainable Institutional Infrastructures: Mastering the 5 C's"
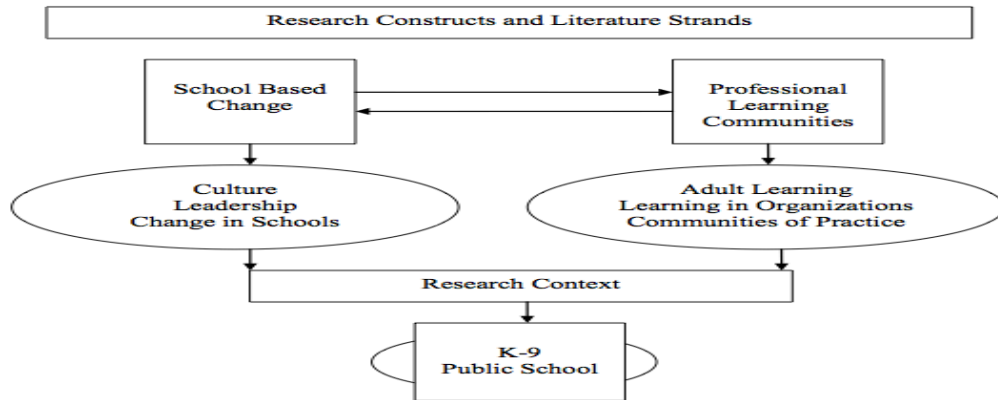
B. Research problem:

Change is indeed the watchword for this millennial generation. The responsibility to educate over 77 million youth for an ever-changing global society is the ultimate evolutionary experiment. Growing concerns from multiple forces have combined to heighten calls for improved education for this new generation. Such a clarion call for academic excellence requires an educational paradigm, which fosters our 21st century school's capacity for establishing systemic collaborative infrastructures for supporting effective teacher leadership and learning. Fullan (1993) suggests that educators must, "redesign the workplace so that innovation and improvement are built into the daily activities of teachers…and [adopt] institutional renewal with new forms of leadership, collegiality, commitment to, and mechanisms for continuous improvement" (p. 353). In order to accomplish such organizational agility schools and collaboration educational institutions will need to develop infrastructures, which empower their most valuable resource [teachers and administrators] with opportunities and authority to develop solutions collaboratively (Weller & Weller, 1997). Such a colossal undertaking demands educators who are not only visionary, but have the courage to increase their capacity for complex problem solving, resilience and ultimately their adaptability to change. According to Sirotnik (2001), "Educators 'must' become their own change agents and active and critical consumers of

their own and others' knowledge in the context of their own practices and the changing of these practices" (p. 107).

C. Research procedure

Using case study methodology I used a purposive sample of three independent case studies to explore the relationship between DuFour & Eaker's (2008) professional learning community model and school based change within the context of K-9 public schools within a mid-sized rural school system in the southwest region of the United States. DuFour and Eaker's (2008) Professional Learning Community (PLC) model provided not only the foundation upon which research questions were developed based on the constructs of the PLC model and school based change, but will also served as a lens through which to analyze the findings of the study. The main question used to guide this research was: What is the relationship between professional learning communities and school based change? The primary source of data collection was 24 semi-structured interviews with each of the principals and related key members of faculty and staff. The secondary sources of data collection will include: observations of professional learning community meetings, staff meetings, related administrative and classroom activities, a 21 question school culture questionnaire administered to a 100+ related school members, and a review of relevant documents.

Research Constructs and Literature Strands

School Based Change → Professional Learning Communities

Culture
Leadership
Change in Schools

Adult Learning
Learning in Organizations
Communities of Practice

Research Context

K-9
Public School

D. Summary of findings

The objective of this multi case study was to explore the individual 'journey' of three separate school's 'processes and outcomes,' analyzing their thoughts and experiences regarding professional learning communities and school based change (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The study findings showed that support, infrastructure, and re-culturing all played significant roles in each of the school's PLC evolutionary journey and that these three themes interfaced and overlapped even as their PLCs continued to develop and change.

School Based Change

Support

Infrastructure

Re-Culture

Professional Learning Communities
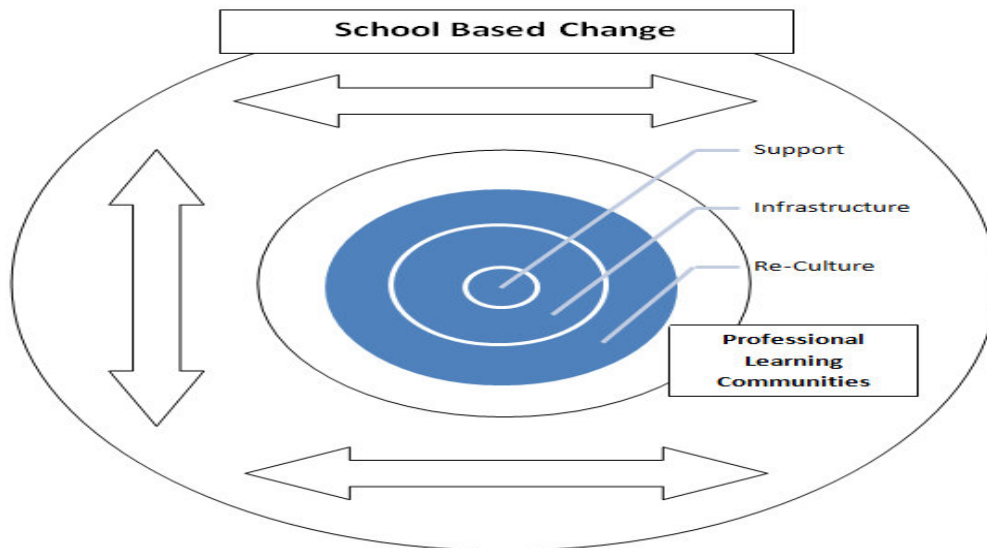
Findings from the study's four data sources (interviews, observations, questionnaire and documents) concurred that changes in the following areas had occurred since the inception of

PLC's: an improvement in the school's consistency regarding academic expectations for students, an increase in the collaboration and communication amongst faculty, administration and the district, more opportunities to engage in shared leadership opportunities, an improvement in their professional commitment to each other, the students and their own teaching and learning, and an increase in their ability to work together to create solutions to ongoing challenges in their classrooms and in the school. As the staff developer from School 1 summarized so eloquently, each of these three school's journey began with a 'disquiet with the status quo' and while each school's journey has been different, study participants concur that each has indeed experienced effective changes in their schools.

E. Conclusions and recommendations

A thorough review of the literature regarding professional learning communities and school based changed revealed a number of overarching themes significant to this study. Research consistently suggested the important role leadership plays in the process as well as the management of related structural, relational and cultural issues within the school. What remained somewhat amorphous in the literature was what was needed to empower the professional learning communities to consistently adapt and effectively and consistently manage ongoing change. The data collected in this study strongly suggested that in order for professional learning communities to continually evolve and consistently adapt there must be a learning leader who is supportive and accessible, one who provides multiple opportunities for shared leadership and responsibility, one who embeds collegial teaching and learning into their teacher's daily work schedules, and one who fosters shared professional commitment amongst the members of his or her professional learning community. Another rather weak area in the literature was the important and relevant role the district and or county office played in supporting and sustaining

school based PLC's and the findings. What was not expected was the surprising ingenuity of each of the school's creativity in establishing and refining professional learning communities to addresses the challenges unique to their schools. Findings from the cross case analysis indicated that all three case study schools differed in their levels of implementation, understanding and utilization of professional learning communities. Although each of the schools reflected varied aspects of a collaborative culture, not all of them operated as a professional learning community, as described in the study's literature review, or perhaps more concisely, each were operating in a different phase and/or level of progression as described in the literature.

The recommendations which emerged from my study's findings were for creating a new teacher leadership and learning paradigm, which would include: 1) leadership which focuses on improving learning outcomes through mastering the 5 C's (*challenge, capture, convert, communicate and culture*), and 2) learning that focuses on a generative framework which 'enhances individuals' capacity to create by empowering them to continually question current assumptions and consistently transfer tacit knowledge into proposing new, creative ways of thinking and doing.

***Documentation Requested**

ERIC Article (ED521670) The Relationship between Professional Learning Communities and School Based Change http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED521670

There is a scanned screen shot below from the ATE handbook supplied at the conference that shows the time and location of my presentation.

Single Paper Sessions   12:50–1:30 p.m.

138   Mills 1

A New Paradigm for Preparing Generative Learning Leaders for 21st Century Schools

Preparing new teachers to be effective learning leaders in today's perpetually changing school environments requires both understand and application of five symbiotic elements – Mastering the 5 C's.

Aileen Jaime Watts, Arkansas Tech University

139   Sterling 6

Arts Integration: An Important Connection for Teaching, Learning, and Schooling

Arts integration is a powerful tool for teachers to increase classroom effectiveness, engage learners and support arts and cultural literacy. This study reports on effective methods and approaches to arts integration.

Jeffrey S Winter, National Louis University

140   Sterling 1

Co-Teaching in Student Teaching: A National Conversation

This interactive session is a facilitated discussion that will allow participants from institutions working with a co-teaching model of student teaching to share their successes and struggles.

Nancy Bacharach and Teresa Washut Heck, St. Cloud State University

141   Sterling 5

Common Core State Standards: What Do They Mean for English Language Learners?

Common Core State Standards provide clear objectives for teaching and learning. But how will these standards apply to English learners and how can teacher educators prepare candidates for implementation?

Jane Manner, East Carolina University

142   Regency F

Developing Preservice Teachers' Knowledge Of And Responsive To Issues School-Age Children Can Confront

Discussion of a Community Partnership Project woven throughout a four-year preparation program that uses an experiential approach to teacher education through practical experiences at nonprofit organizations other than traditional school settings. Current findings demonstrate enhanced awareness of developmental, economic, and family issues, and how teachers can respond in supportive ways.

Regina Marie Mistretta, St. John's University

143   Sterling 4

Exploring Multicultural Education through the Voices of Teacher Candidates: Connecting Theory & Praxis

While exploring multicultural teacher education, it was found that support after a multicultural education course is key, and creates important connections between theory and praxis.

Ashley Ryan and Erin Pike, New Mexico State University

144   Mills 3

Five iPad Apps to Enhance Lesson Delivery

Bring your iPad to this session to learn apps that will enhance your lesson delivery. iPad apps both free and at low cost will be demonstrated on how they can be used to enrich your lesson delivery.

Ming Zhang and Xiaoping Li, Central Michigan University