

Original Paper

Campus Administrator Actions in Support of Core-Content Professional Learning Communities

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Abstract

While research suggests that effective implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs) increases student achievement and supports teacher learning, there is limited research focused on what administrators do to support and encourage effective PLCs. This qualitative study examined the perceptions of 12 core-content teachers from two north Texas high schools with regard to actions of campus administrators in supporting their PLCs. Findings highlighted professional learning, coaching support, common planning, and other actionable supports that campus administrators may provide to support teachers and foster effective PLCs.

Keywords: administrative support, leadership behaviors, organizational learning, professional development, professional learning communities, teacher collaboration

Introduction

Improving student performance and teacher learning remain critical foci for improvement in educational settings throughout the world, including the United States (U.S.). Following several U.S. federal mandates for school improvement over the years, the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA, 1965) was reauthorized in 2015 as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) to enhance previous accountability standards and target college and career readiness for all students. As a result, campus administrators implemented professional learning communities (PLCs) as a primary improvement strategy to increase student performance, enrich teacher learning, and support continuous improvement of the educational organization. As noted by Antinluoma et al. (2018), teacher collaboration through the structure of PLCs strengthens collegiality, builds trust, fosters commitment, and increases knowledge to help teachers positively impact student achievement.

Numerous researchers focused on the importance of campus leaders for creating and sustaining a culture of collegiality to support PLCs. For example, Stewart and Houchens (2014) noted that the increased focus on student performance and teacher collaboration called upon principals to serve as instructional leaders and move the school organization forward to focus on collaboration, assessment, and continuous improvement. Recognizing that teachers are the center of PLCs as they work together in collaborative teams to determine what and how students need to learn, teachers' ability to make these determinations depends upon campus administrators establishing appropriate supports, resources, and a conducive campus culture. However, actions to implement and support PLCs are not enough as it is important for campus leaders to create a culture where PLCs can be implemented, supported, and

sustained (DuFour et al., 2016). Important elements for determining the efficacy of administrators' actions include why administrators make the decisions they make and how resulting leadership actions are perceived by teachers. It is the interconnectedness of all elements, including PLCs, that determines how a system functions.

Campus leaders play an integral role in creating a school culture that will influence the organization as a learning community. Researchers have stressed the importance of the direct involvement and visible actions of the principal as essential for the success of PLCs (Cherkowski, 2016; DuFour et al., 2016). This involvement includes such practices as cultivating a collaborative culture, especially through shared leadership practices, generating a collective vision, and ensuring that supportive conditions are present (DuFour et al., 2016; Thornton & Cherrington, 2014). When teachers and administrators work together and share responsibility for developing and sustaining a culture supportive of PLCs, a collaborative environment can be created (Hipp & Huffman, 2010). Yet, few studies have identified the types of actions a campus administrator takes to support PLCs, especially from the perspective of teachers. Thus, this study focused on what teachers report that administrators do to support and encourage effective PLCs.

Professional Learning Communities

To understand the initial intent and overall concept of PLCs, it is important to consider one of the early researchers in that area. In 1997, Hord identified five dimensions necessary for effective PLCs: (1) Shared and Supportive Leadership, (2) Shared Values and Vision, (3) Collective Learning and Its Application, (4) Shared Personal Practice, and (5) Supportive Conditions. Since that time, researchers further defined effective PLC practices, including DuFour et al. (2016) and Hipp and Huffman (2010) who suggested that the five Hord dimensions of PLCs create conditions for educators to work collaboratively to create an environment where student and teacher learning is foremost for increasing student achievement.

Perhaps one of the most widely recognized models for PLCs was defined by DuFour et al. (2016) as having the characteristics of (a) shared vision, values, and goals; (b) collaborative culture; (c) collective inquiry; (d) action orientation; (e) commitment to continuous improvement; and (f) results orientation. Interestingly, each proposed PLC model includes collaboration, which is teachers' interdependence on each other, learning from each other, and having a sense of community. Carpenter (2017) suggested that teachers must harness the benefits that small groups offer in the physical and intellectual workspace for discussing their classroom practices, reflecting on their own teaching, and planning new teaching strategies. When teachers have time to meet together and discuss their teaching, confidence is built for trying new strategies that impact student learning (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). In her early work, Hord (1997) suggested that PLC meetings that have specific foci provide opportunities for teachers to practice collective learning and application where teachers come together and solve problems, plan collaboratively, and work to ensure that best instructional practice decisions are made, all contributing to increased student achievement.

Earlier researchers (Kruse & Louis, 1993) suggested that PLCs offer benefits to educators through increased teacher professional development, including a focus on student progress on skills and standards, instead of a focus on the historic objective of student compliance. Later, Stewart and Houchens (2014) harkened back to when principals could wade through paperwork in their offices while teachers provided instruction in their classrooms behind closed doors, but increased accountability meant that principals had to become instructional leaders and move the school organization forward to become focused on collaboration, formative assessment, and continuous improvement. Teachers had to share ideas and refine best practices to help ensure progress for all students, not just the ones who happened to be in their classroom.

Thessin and Starr (2011) asserted that school leaders had been so focused on teaching students to collaborate to solve problems that they had forgotten to teach teachers how to do this themselves. In their study of PLCs, state assessment scores increased and, from the teachers' perspective, one contributing factor was that teachers were able to spend time collaborating and determining who was finding skill-based success with students and how that was being achieved. This allowed other teachers to take the successful strategies back to the students in their classroom.

The Campus Leader's Role in Professional Learning Communities

Kanold (2011) noted how the role of the principal changed over time from one of autonomy to one who shares control with team members. Earlier research from Prestine (1993) suggested that principals must be able to democratically share authority, let go of control and allow teachers to work within the vision and mission of the organization, and be a participative member of the work without taking over, thus enabling teachers to do the work needed. To accomplish this purpose, administrators must shape a PLC culture by supporting specific PLC processes to create a conducive environment for grade-specific or content-specific teams to function effectively and make an impact on student learning.

Campus leaders need a clear understanding of how their actions impact teachers and thus impact student learning. It seems reasonable that collaboration would be an important aspect in any effective PLC, but Schechter (2012) found that teachers sometimes shy away from sharing practices and working collaboratively because of the vulnerability and perceived threats of being intellectually or pedagogically inferior to their peers. Each of the PLC models explain that collaboration is not simply the act of professionals working together, it is the reliance of teachers upon each other for support, for learning from each other, and for a sense of community. As DuFour et al. (2016) suggested, professionals must share the idea that an increase in student achievement will not occur in isolation, so it is incumbent upon campus leaders to create a culture and environment where collaboration freely can occur. In a study by Voelkel and Chrispeels (2017), members of high-functioning PLC teams regarded their principal's actions as more positive and transformative while members of low-functioning teams felt less empowered and had a more negative perception of the campus leadership. Earlier, in 2010, Hipp and Huffman suggested that school culture that reflects embedded and sustained PLC practices is a hallmark of successful schools which influence student and adult learning.

Other researchers have stated the importance of the principal's actions and direct involvement as essential for the success of campus PLCs (DuFour et al., 2016; Cherkowski, 2016). The principal's involvement includes cultivating a collaborative culture through shared leadership practices, generating a collective vision, and ensuring that supportive conditions are present (DuFour et al., 2016; Thornton & Cherrington, 2014). Campus leaders play an integral role in creating the culture of a school that influences the organization as a learning community. Thus, when teachers and administrators work together and share responsibility for developing and sustaining a culture supportive of PLCs, a campus collaborative environment can be created (Hipp & Huffman, 2010).

While teachers may do the heavy lifting when working within their specific team, principals and campus leaders influence PLC implementation and effectiveness by acquiring and managing resources and building a culture that supports PLCs (Buttram & Farley-Ripple, 2016; DuFour et al., 2016). Mitchell and Sackney (2006) identified four functions that principals must perform to build a learning community: (a) the center: the principal knows everything happening in the school; (b) the holder of the vision: the principal builds, communicates, and sustains the vision of the school; (c) the builder: the principal creates structures so the focus is on working toward the vision; and (d) the role model: the principal's words and actions converge with how the principal lives the vision. Various factors play into the ability of principals to establish these structures to foster the development and sustainment of campus PLCs.

Often, school districts that implemented PLCs require administrator attendance at collaborative team meetings on their campus. However, DuFour et al. (2016) asserted that principals should not be part of PLCs to ensure teacher compliance with expectations but to model what continuous learning should look like. After their study of sophisticated, emergent, and beginner teacher workgroups, Horn and Kane (2015) questioned whether teacher groups who have not achieved sophisticated classroom practices should come together as an unfacilitated PLC. These researchers found such participating teachers' discourse to be focused on covering content instead of rich conversations regarding student thinking and conceptually thinking about the content skills. In many instances, the principal may be required to be the facilitator of such groups to help provide opportunities for teachers to learn how to move their conversations in the direction that will impact student learning in more refined manners. As the lead learner on a campus, the principal is tasked with creating a culture where the five dimensions of PLCs exist and are continuously refined for improvement; however, there is a lack of literature

regarding specific beneficial administrator actions when supporting PLC teams.

Conceptual Framework

Senge (2006) argued that all interactions and actions within a system are interrelated and affect each other in a way that patterns are created. Thus, the conceptual framework for this study was based on Senge's organizational systems perspective as it relates to Hord's (1997) five PLC dimensions. Our framework (Figure 1) shows how administrator actions are related to effective PLCs in a school organizational system where campus administrators' actions impact the effectiveness of the entire learning organization.

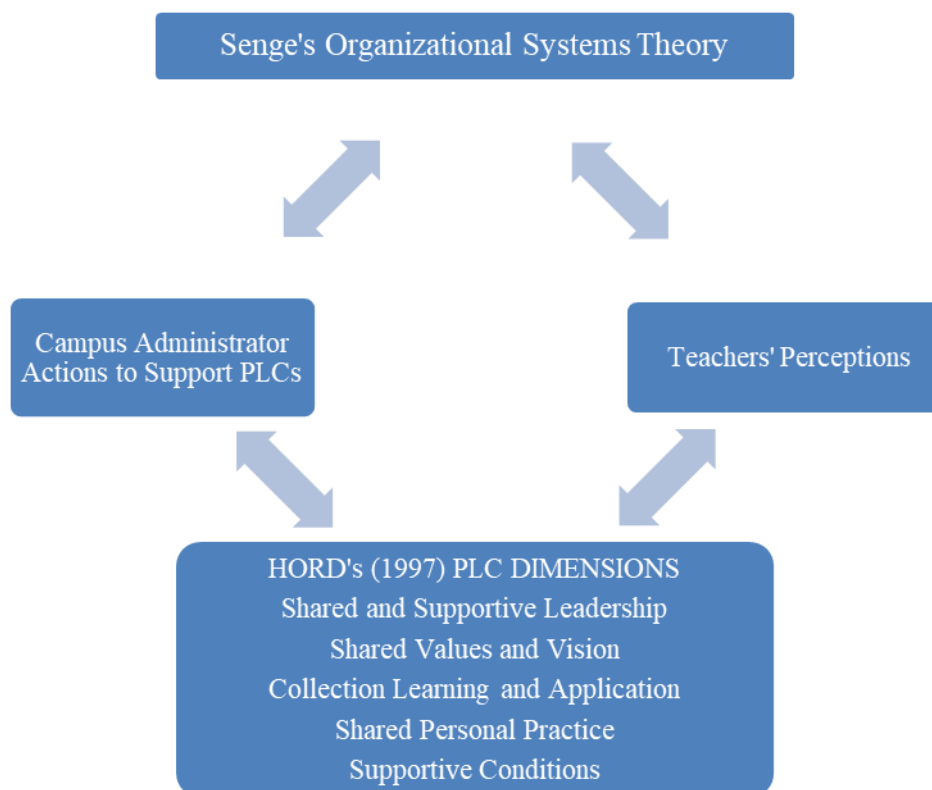


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Depicting Campus Administrator Actions to Support PLCs

Methods

This article draws on data collected from a larger study, which used a mixed-method research design to study teacher perceptions of campus administrator actions that support core-content PLCs. Using a 4-point Likert scale survey, the larger study provided an overall picture of the levels of PLC implementation. The results showed that there was consistently high PLC mean scores (Supportive Conditions-Relations: 3.38, Collective Learning and Application: 3.35, Shared Values and Vision: 3.35, Supportive Conditions-Structures: 3.26, Shared and Supportive Leadership: 3.22, and Shared Personal Practice: 3.05 across both schools. However, for this article, our focus is on the findings of qualitative data. The following qualitative research question guided the study: As perceived by teachers, what campus administrator actions support PLC teams? Data were gathered to explore teacher perceptions of campus and classroom practices which administrators provide and support for implementing and sustaining the five PLC dimensions. Teacher perspectives were explored in-depth through participant interviews using a protocol based on Hord's (1997) PLC dimensions.

Context of the Study

This study was conducted in a large, fast-growth Texas public school district that serves students in grades PK through 12. At the time of the study, student enrollment was over 60,000, including 41% White, 29% Asian, 14% Hispanic, 11% African American, 4% two or more races, and 1% American Indian. The site was purposively chosen because it is a large district with many high schools that offer various teacher PLC experiences, and where PLC implementation and sustainment was a district expectation for several years. The district is considered fast-growth due to the high increase in new student enrollment over the last two decades, ranging from 7% to 30% each year, resulting in the opening of 68 new campuses, including nine high schools. The exponential population growth and increased accountability measures prompted district leaders to look for ways to ensure instruction was occurring at high levels at all district campuses. District leaders also stressed the importance of teachers sharing responsibility for student learning, thus districtwide PLC essentials were employed to guide teachers. The need for organizational systemwide initiatives led to implementation of content-level PLC teams at all district high schools.

The student enrollment of the two district high schools selected for this study ranged from 1800-2100, with economically disadvantaged students ranging from 4-11%. The selected high schools earned an “A” rating based on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) performance and accountability standards for student achievement. College and career readiness indicators and the graduation rate were included in the rating for the 2018-2019 year of the study.

Participants

To obtain a purposeful sample from the population of district high schools, the district secondary curriculum director was provided the PLC Development Rubric (PLCDR) (Hipp, 2003) to determine which two high schools had most successfully implemented and supported the PLC dimensions. The selected high schools were similar in size and rapid-growth rates. From a total of 152 teachers, all teachers in the content areas of English, mathematics, science, and social studies were recruited to participate in the quantitative survey. Interview participants were from teams that presented discrepant or highly congruent data on the survey, for a total of six teachers per campus.

Data Collection

Qualitative data were collected through 12 semi-structured, in-depth, one-on-one individual interviews. All interviews were conducted through the Zoom™ virtual meeting platform because in-person interviews were not a safe option due to COVID-19 pandemic precautions at that time. To increase credibility, the protocol employed in the interviews was field tested with detailed recommendations considered in the final protocol. During the 60-minute interviews, notes were taken to notate participants’ body language and behaviors. Following transcription and analysis of the audio-recorded interviews, member-checking gave participants the opportunity to review a summary of the findings and provide feedback about the accuracy of their transcribed statements. Participants’ feedback was reviewed and included, as appropriate, to provide validity to the findings.

Data Analysis

After audio-recorded qualitative data were transcribed, interview transcripts were read to gain a holistic perspective, then reread and coded. In rereading, several new categories emerged and were added to the codes. For the first order analysis, interview transcripts were coded using open coding so codes were similar to the original survey data or the participants’ own words that represented their perceptions. In the second order analysis, these codes were used to determine recurring categories presented by interviewees. Then data entered as Word documents were analyzed with Atlas.ti 7 qualitative data software to generate codes and themes.

Limitations of the Study

One study limitation was the difference in each campus PLC culture and the levels of PLC implementation and sustainment. Several factors could have influenced variances in teacher answers between the two sampled high schools, including how long the principal and each teacher had been at the campus. Also, teachers’ previous experiences with PLCs or their biases regarding the practices at

their current campus could have impacted their responses to the survey statements or the interview questions. Another possible limitation could have been the respondents' lack of trust that their responses would remain confidential. Precautions were taken to mitigate the potential negative implications of these possible limitations.

Findings

We organize our findings by the three emerged themes: administrator's role in PLC teams, existing supports for PLC teams, and needed supports. Pseudonyms utilized for the participating campuses were High School A (HSA) and High School B (HSB).

Of the 25 total teachers recruited via email, six from each campus agreed to participate in a 40-minute interview. The teachers are referred to as T1 – T12. This table shows the emerged themes and the related subthemes. Findings are discussed per emerged theme.

Table 1. Emerged Themes with Related Subthemes

Theme #	Emerg ed Theme	Related Subthemes
Theme 1	Administrator's role in PLC teams	Unbiased member of PLC Ensuring compliance Support for the team
Theme 2	Existing supports for PLC teams	Support of learning opportunities Support of time Support of instructional and digital learning coaches and librarians Support of campus administrators
Theme 3	Needed supports	Administrator visibility Clear PLC expectations PLC resources

Theme 1: Administrator's Role in PLC Teams

Interview Questions 5 and 6 asked teachers to identify their perception of the campus administrator's role in a recent PLC team meeting and their overall perception of the purpose of an administrator attending PLC meetings. Several subthemes emerged regarding this topic.

Subtheme 1: Administrator as unbiased member of the PLC team. As stated by T1:

The biggest thing for me is that they're a neutral third party.... when you're a member of the team and you have your own interests, they don't necessarily see you as objective. There are times that's difficult; there are times we all have our own students and we know that ultimately, we're responsible for our students and we want to do what's right and best for them. So, you get in this collective rut where there's some times you need that objective third party to be there to say, "All right, well why don't we try this and then we can come back, and we see how it goes."

T11 echoed T1's thoughts.

Also, it's nice because the administrator is not really part of the team since they are not there every time. They are neutral, and they really come with an outside perspective of what's best for students. Sometimes teachers get caught up in the planning and in our content work and we begin to take criticism from our teammates personally. So, it's nice when administrators come in and provide a really objective perspective.

Subtheme 2: Ensuring compliance. Administrators play a role in PLCs to make sure that teams are compliant in meeting campus expectations regarding PLC processes and district and campus expectations regarding curriculum and grading. T11 described the administrator's role in a recent PLC meeting.

The administrator was making sure that (a) we were meeting, and (b) that we were staying focused on the task at hand and not getting sidetracked, because there were issues with that team not being effective in that way.

Teachers commented that it is helpful at times when the administrator can be the person on the team who reminds the team of the campus expectations so team members can continue to move forward. T8 stated, "If you can have an admin come in there and just express from their position, the expectations of the campus, that helps things move smoothly and it did help us and help us get back on track," and he wished that the administrator would have stepped up sooner in that instance so the team could have gotten back on track in a timelier manner. T1 discussed that at times he perceived that it was difficult for administrators to separate being part of a PLC team in a supportive role from being an evaluator.

This is where it gets sticky because our administrators are our T-TESS evaluators. I think sometimes it's hard for administrators to separate that...Teachers withdraw when administrators are around. So it's innate when we tie it to the evaluation system.

Subtheme 3: Administrator as a support for the team. This subtheme was mentioned by all 12 teachers who noted that support takes several forms, including simply checking in to see if the team needs anything, observing and listening to the team work, furthering the team's thinking through questioning, or offering ideas or suggestions. T11 offered perceptions about the administrator's role with the PLC team.

That support and asking the right questions and making sure that we are heading in the right direction, instead of just telling, "Here's what you should do," then it's really effective. And that's the type of support that teachers want, it's not very effective when an administrator comes in and they're not the ones in the classroom, they're not the ones teaching. They're not the ones dealing with the classroom management issues and they come in and they're the expert and they know what we should be doing.

T10 provided an example of an administrator's actions that were supportive of the teachers' work in a recent PLC meeting, especially as they were a new team working with a new curriculum.

The AP started asking us questions, "Well, could they show it with this, and could they show it with that instead?" And so that helped us broaden, and then she started asking questions along the lines of, "Okay, well, what is the direct teach skills that they would need to know ahead of time going into the project"? Then, "What sort of checkpoint"?...She shared an example of a project that she had done that was similar, in process. And that was helpful, but mainly questions, she saved suggestions until the end.

Theme 2: Existing Supports for PLC Teams

Interview Question 4 asked teachers to identify aspects or resources at their campus they felt were helpful and supportive of their PLC teams. Related to the conceptual framework and the five PLC dimensions, the most cited supports identified by teachers were the Collective Learning and Application and the Supportive Conditions dimensions. The supports identified may not be initiated or implemented within a PLC team meeting by an administrator; however, campus administrators are responsible for ensuring these supports are available for their campus staff.

Subtheme 1: Support of professional learning opportunities. Within the Collective Learning and Application PLC dimension, T10 discussed the campus professional development that took place at their campus.

During professional learning our first week of PD, we reviewed the four PLC questions. What the PLC process looks like. We talked about what it is, what it is not, versus coming from other campuses where they're doing that PLC light version and what it really should look like here at

our campus.

T10 further described how professional learning related to the four PLC questions was then on-going throughout the year, so it was not just a once-a-year training that was soon forgotten. Teachers liked that these learning opportunities took place during the school day because they did not have to give up personal time before or after school. T9 discussed that it was helpful when teachers got to attend job-embedded learning sessions with their teams. It gave them the opportunity to discuss how they would implement their learning in their classrooms.

Subtheme 2: Support of time. The greatest amount of data regarding what teachers perceived to be supportive of their PLC work was aligned with the Supportive Conditions PLC dimension. The first identified supportive condition was common planning time that was built into the school day. T11 provided perspective as to why the common planning time was so important.

Other campuses/districts who do not have that built in time, it just becomes something that gets put on the back burner, because it then becomes one extra thing that teachers do on their own time. When you make teachers choose between this is either we're taking away from your family time and your kids and where you're going to have to make the choice of being here for ours, it creates issues with the school culture.

T1 echoed this same sentiment: "Common planning time is about respecting teachers' time but also emphasizing that it sends a message that, as a campus, this is what we do."

Subtheme 3: Support of instructional coaches. Teachers also identified the support of the IC as being beneficial. T12 discussed the role of the IC with their PLC team.

We have an instructional coach that comes sometimes, and their job is to make sure that we're doing the things we're supposed to be doing to meet campus goals and also to help us with ideas, brainstorming lessons if that is needed. We also meet with them after major assessments to break down data. They go through and talk about what went well, what may need improvement.

T11 talked about the importance of having their IC be part of their PLC meetings to make sure they are focused and do not become complacent.

I also think the biggest component is having ICs come and make sure that we are operating at a functional level in our PLC and it's not a waste of anyone's time. And it's asking the right questions to make sure that we are having that self-reflection, of, Are we really doing what's best for kids? Are we really focused as a PLC and are we functioning as an effective PLC?

The campus digital learning coach (DLC) and librarian were also identified as a meaningful support of teachers' PLC work. T9 described what the support from their DLC and librarian looks like on their campus.

Our librarian will email us resources. Our DLC does walks in the morning before school and checks on people and asks how things are going...I think they've gotten so good at sharing, that then they reach out with good resources that other people have mentioned. A lot of times it is when we're sitting together talking or planning and we know we want to do something big, or we know when to do something that's more tech oriented, more project based, whatever it may be, to reach out to them. I think they just have that big picture idea where we're always coming from that curriculum standpoint and feeling that attachment, knowing, "Oh, I still got to get them this information." You can get bogged down in what you've done before or feeling like you've got to get this content where they can look at it from that instructional, top-down view. Maybe provide some insight that we didn't really think about.

T7 explained, "So, if we are wanting to branch out and do something new, then they're [the DLC] like, give me what you got, and I'll come up with something creative and fun for you."

Subtheme 4: Support of campus administrators. Support from campus administrators was also important to teachers as they work with their PLC teams. T5 felt that one way administrators supported teachers and PLC work was through open communication and making sure that teachers were aware of campus and district initiatives or expectations.

I think with anything that's new, a buzzword that's coming into the vernacular of the district, [the principal] is always really good and the associate, they're always really good about getting those things out, "Hey, look, this is what grading might look like from now on."

T9 also recognized that although their AP may not be a content specialist, she still finds ways to support the PLC teams.

I think our AP is really trying to get in and answer questions where she can. She recognizes her limitations on a curriculum front, but there's a lot of times that she's got things that we need, or some information that we need, or permissions that we need.

Theme 3: Needed Supports

Findings for this theme generated three subthemes: administrator visibility, clear PLC expectations, and PLC resources.

Subtheme 1: Administrator visibility. Teachers also identified several supports they felt were lacking or things they wanted from their administrators that would help their PLC teams. A sentiment that was shared by 8 of the 12 teachers interviewed was the importance of campus administrators being visible in the hallways and around the campus and in PLC meetings. T4 described why he feels that campus administrators being visible is so important.

My supervisor does an incredible job where she walks the halls during passing period and says, "Hey, how's your day going" and just creates a welcoming spirit. That's not about, well, your kids doing this, are they, are you sure you want to do that? And it makes it easier for me to drop in to her office. So, building that personal relationship that's not based on our performance.

T6 shared how campus administrators being in the hallways allows teachers to see them often and not be fearful when an administrator comes to talk to them.

I especially like when the principal walks the hallway. I'm usually afraid that I am in trouble. That she's coming to me to tell me that I do something wrong because I'm not used to seeing her. So, I think that again, like they would walk around and chat and...pop in my classroom in the morning and say hi.

Regarding administrators participating as part of PLC teams, T9 related this idea back to the goals and vision of the campus, but also acknowledged that administrators having time to be visible and participate is sometimes out of their hands.

I feel like it's really hard to have a pulse on your school if you're not in the PLC meetings and in the classroom. I feel like it's a system that really, with the size of the school, and the number of tasks that are going on, and the number of meetings and trainings, and administrators are getting pulled in so many ways. I think our structure makes it really difficult to know what's going on.

T10 added that an administrator being visible in a PLC meeting needed to be commonplace.

[Administrators] coming to a PLC consistently is one action, because sometimes if it's not consistent and they pop in, you are kind of taken aback and you're thinking, "Oh, why are they here?" Where if you kind of establish that kind of culture where they're always popping in, it's almost weird if they don't pop in.

T6 succinctly summed up the ideas that several teachers shared when he stated, "Admin presence needs to be normalized in a PLC planning situation in a low stakes environment."

Subtheme 2: Clear PLC expectations. Another emergent theme regarding what teachers perceived would be helpful to their teams was campus administrators setting clear expectations for the PLC culture and processes on their campus. This theme most closely aligns with the Shared Vision and Values PLC dimension. T1 discussed the need to revisit this idea every year because of turnover. A high school campus in the studied district may have approximately 120 teachers at a given time, so inevitability there will be turnover each year. He stated that it is essential that administrators,

...understand that there's turnover on the staff every year. So just because we spent one year doing

this, we can't just continue it the next year, we have to assume that we may have 10, 15, 20 new teachers coming with their own PLC experiences.

T1 also tied this idea back to the importance of the campus vision and how the work of PLC team supports that vision.

... every year, "Hey, this is what we do, here are the structures in place, these are our expectations." I think that norming as a campus at the beginning of the year is something that shows that intentionality to say, "Hey, here's what we believe in." But everybody is invested, the teachers are part of creating those norms.

Subtheme 3: PLC resources. The need for resources was a theme that emerged from the teacher interview data. This theme aligns with the PLC dimension, Supportive Conditions. Several different types of resources were mentioned, including a defined PLC process chart or script, an organized central location to find needed resources, and the need for content-specific resources. T2 described that "Having a checklist or I think just kind of like something to guide our PLCs" or a "guiding script" would help their team to make sure they are doing everything they need and would help them to be more productive.

T4 explained that often there are so many resources for teachers to choose from that it can be overwhelming. T4 felt it would be beneficial for campus administrators to:

...collect resources without pushing resources. Instead of this is what you need to do now, and then try this next and do this, just having a place for us. In those PLCs when they're there, or when you reach out say, I've collected six options for you. Do you think one of these fits? Think of using them as a resource, that's something that's a hard balance without feeling like they're pushing us to do everything different.

T11 mentioned that when campus administrators ask what resources teachers need is encouraging, but administrators had to make sure to follow through on their offering of support.

When an administrator comes in and says, "Okay, well, what do you need for support? What do you need from me? Do you need me to pull this data for you? Do you need me to do this?" That there is that follow through, because administrators get busy and sometimes that can become a back-burner task, but followthrough is always great, especially when we're needing resources.

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of teachers' perceptions of campus administrator supports of PLC teams. From the interviews, the first emerged theme was that teachers felt it was an administrator's role to remind the team of expectations and to support members in becoming a higher functioning team. This was especially true of teachers who provided stories of being part of lower functioning or dysfunctional PLC teams. While this role may be inferred to be a more authoritarian function of an administrator, it may be necessary to help a team become more effective in the long run. Teachers felt it was an administrator's duty to observe the team, listen, and then offer ideas. Teachers did not want administrators coming to a meeting and dictating what the team needed to be doing. Teachers appreciated when administrators asked questions to remind the team of bigger goals or to help team members remember the direction toward which they should be heading, similar to how Hord and Sommers (2008) indicated that leaders need to support teams by asking questions and probing teams in a positive manner to further their thinking. Administrators who attend PLC team meetings in a judgmental or dictatorial manner hamper the learning and progress of a team. All the themes regarding teachers' perceptions of campus administrators' roles within PLC teams require an administrator to be present in PLC team meetings. DuFour et al. (2016) indicated that modeling what collaboration, conflict resolution, and learning behaviors look like are campus leader actions needed to support PLC teams.

Teachers had several responses when they were asked to identify resources at their campus that were supportive of PLCs. The first examples were aligned with the Collective Learning and Application PLC dimension (Hord, 1997). Teachers discussed how helpful PLC training and learning opportunities are as new teachers are introduced to the campus each year. Teachers remarked that PLC training at the

beginning of the year helped to alleviate problems within teams as the year progressed, as new teachers gained an understanding of the expectations regarding PLCs at the campus and did not solely rely upon any past PLC experiences they might have had. Teachers also remarked that on-going professional learning regarding the four PLC questions (DuFour & Eaker, 1998) and PLC processes (Hord, 1997) was beneficial throughout the year. Without reminders, if learning only occurs at the beginning of the year, teams may relapse into old habits or lose steam to continue growing. Teams also need support through continual professional learning to effectively implement new programs or initiatives. According to Hord and Sommers (2008), professionals must have learning opportunities to reflect upon their practices, refine those practices, and define additional professional learning that is needed to improve student learning.

Another frequently cited support was the availability and support of the campus instructional coach (IC), digital learning coach (DLC), and librarian. This campus practice aligns with the Shared Personal Practice PLC dimension (Hord, 1997). This was a relative strength for the studied campuses. Teachers communicated their understanding that campus administrators had many responsibilities, recognizing that it was not always possible for the administrator to attend PLC team meetings. In the absence of the administrator, teachers reported that it was helpful to have the support of the IC to help move the team forward. The DLC and librarian were an asset to help teams integrate technology or other instructional activities into their plans. As explained by Buttram and Farley-Ripple (2016), one reason teachers may find the help of these other staff members, especially the IC, as being supportive is that ICs are often able to spend more time with teachers and may even still be classroom teachers, so they are perceived to have greater relevant experience similar to that of a teacher.

Teachers reported that most supports were aligned with the Supportive Conditions PLC dimension (Hord, 1997). Common planning time during the school day was the most frequently cited support. DuFour et al. (2016) posited that if PLCs are going to be communicated as a priority, they need to be supported as a priority in the master schedule by administrators providing teams with common collaborative time to work during the school day. Teachers reiterated this message, commenting that if PLCs were determined to be a mechanism for teachers to help move toward the campus vision and achievement of campus goals, teachers needed the time to be able to do so. Teachers from both campuses described how this was a support that is mostly built into their school day. However, some of the teachers were either on a team or knew of a team that did not have common planning time built into the school day, so those teams had to meet before or after school. Those teachers did not feel that time was used as effectively as having dedicated time to collaborate during the day.

Hord (1997) stressed the importance of a nurturing school culture where teachers know they are supported. She noted that such a culture demonstrates what Senge (1990) described as a successful learning organization. Thus, our study revealed several ways that campus administrators might better support PLCs. When asked to identify supportive actions they felt were lacking, teachers discussed several items. The first supportive action teachers desired more of was campus administrators having increased visibility in the hallways and in PLC meetings. Teachers discussed the importance of impromptu informal conversations with administrators in the hallways or just outside of formal evaluation scenarios. They described how these conversations were important to building a relationship with administrators so that when they needed help, they felt more comfortable going to an administrator for that assistance. Mitchell and Sackney (2006) considered this level of visibility and the presence of an open-door policy to be the work of a campus leader as the leader continually understands the teaching and learning happening within the school building. Additionally, teachers stated that if they did not have a relationship with administrators, when an administrator came to their hallway or in their classroom, they were uneasy because they felt like they may be in trouble.

Leithwood and Azah (2015) connected the importance of communication to effective collaboration and the presence of trusting relationships. In our study, during PLC meetings, administrator visibility was not necessarily wanted, but team members wanted more check-ins and an administrator stopping by the meeting to see if the team needed anything. Teachers shared that if PLCs were a priority on the campus, administrators should be visible during PLC meetings at some point to gain an understanding of the actual progress of the campus. Mitchell and Sackney (2006) discussed how the principal is a role model for all parties within a school community, including how to treat others, how to communicate, and for

what good teaching and learning looks like on a campus.

Teachers also expressed a desire that campus administrators set clear expectations for the PLC processes at their campus. To aid PLC teams in ensuring they were following those expectations, teachers stated that a PLC process chart, script, or visual would be helpful. Lastly, teachers indicated that because there is a plethora of resources for them to use, it would be beneficial if there was a central digital location where those resources could be housed so it was easier to find the resources as needed.

In summary, as Hord (1997) stated in her earlier work, principals' actions intended for leading to school improvement are critical to the important role of campus administrator. Through Hord's (1997) work in Senge's (2006) concept of a learning organization where the culture was nurturing and teachers collaborated, this experience led to her five dimensions of PLCs that provided the foundation for this study.

Implications for Action

The opportunity exists for teachers and campus administrators to view the effectiveness of supports differently, so one purpose of conducting the study was to identify which campus administrator actions support PLC teams. As perceived by teacher interview participants, the most frequently cited supportive actions of campus administrators include opportunity for professional learning, coaching support, and common planning time. Teachers need job-embedded professional learning about campus and district initiatives that are related to PLC processes. PLC team members need support from instructional coaches, the librarian, and the digital learning specialist. To be effective, PLC teams need a common planning time during the school day. Teachers need increased administrator visibility in hallways and in PLC team meetings, clear expectations for what is expected on PLC teams and the campus processes related to the teams, a scripted PLC process that provides a visual of expectations, and a central location for PLC resources that are readily accessible by PLC team members.

Recommendations for Further Research

Although the data collected were informative and insightful, this study was limited in scope as only two high schools within one north Texas suburban school district were studied. Within the studied district, this study could be replicated repeatedly over time to measure how the implementation and sustainment of actions that support PLCs change over time. Another option for future research could be a study conducted at the middle school or elementary school level. While there may be supportive actions on the part of campus administrators that are applicable at all grade levels, there also may be actions that are particularly relevant for some grade levels more than others. Additionally, the study could be expanded to a larger sample within the studied district since this study included only two district high schools. Although not discussed here, there was intriguing data collected through the quantitative survey that could warrant further study as well, such as an in-depth analysis of the data disaggregated by total years of teaching, by years of teaching within the district, and by teacher content area, along with context provided by additional qualitative data, could add to the implications of the current research or the focus of a new study.

Conclusion

There is ample research indicating what supports and resources need to be implemented to support PLC teams on campuses and research indicating what the role of campus administrators should be in supporting PLC teams. However, there has been little research to gain insight from the perspective of the teachers on PLC teams regarding their perception of how supportive the resources, supports, and campus administrator actions really are, which was the purpose of this study. These insights garnered from teachers at the two studied high schools could provide campus administrators input regarding possible effective uses of their time. Through the data collected, it was clear what supports teachers felt were supportive of PLC teams and what supports may be missing and need to be implemented. If it is educators' goal to positively impact student learning, then they must do so through collective efforts, starting with their PLC teams. Campus administrators must align campus resources to support the vision of the campus and the work of PLC teams so progress can be made toward student learning goals. When all stakeholders within the organization align efforts with the campus vision, all educators at the campus can work as a system to achieve their organizational goals.

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