



COLLABORATIVE EVALUATION AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: AMPLIFYING THE POWER OF TEACHER PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS

Cynthia B. Bauman¹, Liliana Rodríguez-Campos²

¹Ph.D., Florida Atlantic University, 777 Glades Road, Boca Raton, FL 33431

²Ph.D. University of South Florida, 4202 E. Fowler Avenue Tampa, FL 33620, USA

ABSTRACT

The novelty of the Model for Collaborative Evaluations or MCE (Rodríguez-Campos & Rincones–Gómez, 2013) resides in the way in which each of its elements (components and subcomponents) influences the others and, as a consequence, the overall collaborative evaluation. To accomplish a comprehensive collaborative evaluation, the interactive use of the MCE elements on a rotating and remixing basis is recommended. However, there is a benefit of utilizing the individual MCE component Identify the Situation, and specifically the subcomponent Identify Stakeholders. Social Network Analysis (SNA) was used in the featured case study (Bauman, 2018) to create visual representations of teacher professional networks that operate within a school. Prominent members of this network were identified as teacher leaders. Teachers who are identified as teacher leaders by their peers, and engage in collaborative practices, are able to provide a unique perspective about school operation practices and implementation of processes for school improvement planning.

KEYWORDS: Collaborative Evaluation, School Improvement, Social Network Analysis, Teacher Leadership.

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this article is to describe how the Model for Collaborative Evaluations (Rodríguez-Campos & Rincones–Gómez, 2013) or MCE can be used as a tool to foster school improvement planning. This model provides a framework for inclusive involvement in the school improvement process, including needs assessment. This article includes an overview of the MCE, with a focus on the component Identify the Situation and the subcomponent Identify Stakeholders. Incorporating the structured MCE into school improvement planning can kindle stakeholder involvement, increase meaningful use of evaluation by stakeholders, and contribute to knowledge-based decision making (Fetterman, Sukowski, & Rodríguez-Campos, 2018). It also includes an overview of the featured case study (Bauman, 2019) that utilized Social Network Analysis (SNA) to identify prominent members of a teacher professional network within one successful Title I elementary school. Empowering teachers to have a voice in their schools can have an impact on school improvement (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Murphy, 2005; Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2011). Furthermore, “Leadership resides, not in individuals, but in the spaces between and among individuals” (Taylor, Goeke, Klein, Onore, and Geist, 2011, p. 921). This article provides examples of why the MCE is relevant and applicable to the school improvement setting. Implications for integration and application of SNA and the MCE are discussed.

Purpose of the Case Study:

The purpose of the featured case study (Bauman, 2018) was to uncover patterns in teacher professional networks. The overall guiding question for this study was, to what extent do teachers utilize professional networks to seek information and influence others as teacher leaders working toward a common goal of student achievement and school improvement?

The Model for Collaborative Evaluation:

This model endeavors to achieve a holistic learning environment to support collaborative evaluation (Rodríguez-Campos & Rincones–Gómez, 2013). This is in alignment with the concept of the professional learning community (DuFour & Fullan, 2013), or other structures, which seek to build capacity for instructional improvement through interdependent relationships within school cultures (Hovardas, 2016; Hunzicker, 2012; Moolenaar, Slegers, & Daly, 2012). The six components of the MCE (Figure 1.1) are arranged in a cycle of improvement designed to be interactive and collaborative with stakeholders. The component Identify the Situation includes the subcomponent Identify Stakeholders. In the school environment, teachers are generally the practitioner stakeholders. What characteristics or quality of practitioners should be included? Social Network Analysis could help determine members of teacher professional networks within the school. Once the members of the network have been defined, further analysis could identify prominent members of the network who might then be potential collaboration members (CMs). They could play a dominant part in the improvement planning and evaluation process. Not only this potentially strengthens the school improvement process by maximizing the professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) in the building, the inclusion of teachers in the process also can build capacity for future improvement planning collaboration.

Collaboration and School Improvement:

Examining the alignment of teacher professional networks with the MCE as a

framework can add to the tools educators have to better facilitate school improvement planning and implementation. The United States Department of Education identifies the initial phase of school improvement planning process as the needs assessment (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education). The needs assessment as a key factor in school improvement planning, and stakeholder engagement and collaborative identification of improvement are two elements for a successful needs assessment (Cuiccio & Husby-Slater, 2018). Developing a culture of improvement and inquiry for student achievement is in alignment with the MCE's purpose of making collaborative evaluation inclusive and practical for implementation. It is a straightforward tool to follow in order to simplify the collaborative evaluation process. This model's transparency and flexibility allow for authentic interactions, not based on compliance but on inquiry for improvement. The framework of the MCE and the application of network analysis for identifying stakeholders can be used together to create a flexible pool of CMs that can be invited to be involved at any point in the process. This approach seeks to build upon the strengths within the network. Trust is a key factor in revealing the full reach of the network through SNA. Potential members must be willing to honestly and transparently reveal the connection they believe they have with others in their professional environment. The featured case study provides an example of the conditions for collaborative evaluation as supported by the MCE.

METHODOLOGY:

This case focused on a Title I elementary school that has had success in student achievement. Data about advice-seeking was collected through observations, an advice-seeking survey, and follow-up interviews in order to identify and visualize professional networks within the school.

Social Network Analysis (SNA):

This type of analysis was used to provide a visual representation, through Gephi software (Bastian, Heymann, & Jacomy, 2009), of advice-seeking networks for instructional practice, improving practice, and innovating practice. Teachers were asked, “To whom do you go to for advice?” for these three purposes. The use of an advice-seeking survey within a case study along with observations of professional learning communities (PLCs) and follow-up interviews provided a way to triangulate the data, paint a more complete picture of the case and lend reliability to the network results (Baker-Doyle, 2015; Daly, Moolenaar, Bolivar & Burke, 2010). After the observational, survey, and interview data was compiled, composite maps were created of all edges (ties) within the combined networks. One sociogram each is presented for advice-seeking for instructional practice, improving practice, and innovating practice.

Content Analysis:

Teachers that were more prominent in measures of centrality (Faust & Wasserman, 1992) within the observed and surveyed networks were interviewed. Content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) of the interviews produced a matrix of results organized according to the four constructs of teacher leadership, networks, efficacy, and innovation.

FINDINGS:

The findings were used to identify additional examples of contexts that would support collaboration for improvement and innovation. These findings also

reflected upon lessons learned and indicated that the MCE is aligned with and especially useful for providing a strategic framework for the implementation of collaborative evaluations and school improvement planning because the stakeholders have established collaborative networks for continued growth and student achievement. Taking a collaborative approach within professional learning communities enabled an emphasis on the needed transformation and school improvement. This case study demonstrates that established professional networks characterized by a culture of trust, shared leadership, and expertise supports collective efficacy for improvement and innovation.

A Synthesis of the SNA:

Instructional Practice. Through these composite sociograms, based on all sources of data, a more complete picture of connections between staff emerged. Figure 1.2 indicates that only six staff members are isolates on the fringes of the instructional practice advice-seeking network as represented by the data collected during the duration of the study. These are individuals that were not members of an observed grade level professional learning community (PLC) were not respondents in the survey, and were not interviewed. Also, their peers within the network did not select them as targets for advice seeking either in the survey or the interviews.

Improvement and innovation. The advice seeking networks for improvement (Figure 1.3) and innovation (Figure 1.4) became more apparent when all sources of data were used together. Although each sociogram had greater numbers of isolates (unconnected personnel) than the instructional practices network, it is clear that the instructional members of this staff do reach out to each other for advice for improvement and innovation. In addition, the number of isolates within any network captured during this data collection most likely reflects the individuals who did not voluntarily participate in the survey or interviews, or were not mentioned within someone else's network. It is unlikely that this study accurately captured the complete network due to less than 100% participation in the study. However, these results can give insight into some trends within the network. For example, once all data were compiled for the three categories of practice, it became clear that there were only six individuals that presented as isolates in all three sociograms, and five more that presented as isolates within both the improvement and innovation sociograms. While it may be that these isolate individuals were part of a network not captured by this study, the observations, survey, and interviews conducted provided information to paint a picture of the opportunities for and operationalization of advice seeking networks within this case setting. Although these visualizations of the networks are helpful in noting trends and patterns, such as the prominence of non classroom teachers and administration, only a deeper conversation with individuals within the network could reveal more about teacher perception of these networks. These perceptions were captured by interviewing teachers prominent within the networks.

A Synthesis of the Interviews:

These conversations revealed perceptions of leadership within networks between teachers. Dominant themes are grouped within this analysis around the four constructs of teacher leadership, professional networks, efficacy, and innovation. Through the analysis process, it became apparent that the construct of teacher leadership was singularly linked to the relationships within networks that exist in this setting. Teacher leadership within professional networks builds a foundation of efficacy for improvement and innovation.

Content Analysis for Teacher Leadership and Professional Networks:

Teachers' perceptions of leadership and the connections they make with each other were grounded in technical skill, interpersonal attributes, and a leadership culture within the school. The teachers saw themselves as actors in a shared purpose for student achievement.

Technical skills - finding what "perks up my teaching ears". Two themes emerged in technical skills: experience and expertise, and resources.

Experience and expertise. Teachers repeatedly referenced technical expertise and experience when relating why they went to certain individuals for advice: "Yeah she just she knows her stuff and she's never been afraid to share with her people." They also referenced it when explaining why they thought others might come to them: "I think it's knowledge. I think it's being knowledgeable about what you are preaching to them." Another teacher stated that when she hears something that "perks up my teaching ears like out there might be good to ask about." It is also clear by their responses that the expertise could come from anyone on campus, not just those with specialized roles: "Sometimes it's other teachers even and so [it's not] just someone who has that coaching role or administrative role." When asked, "What makes a teacher leader?", one teacher indicated that this process of learning and sharing as a leader was an integral part of being a teacher: "Being knowledgeable and being open to learning new things. I think it's hard to be a teacher and not be open to learning new practices and learning -- I mean, just because you're a teacher, you're learning as well with the students."

Resources. Teachers spoke about resources. Their comments were usually was not in reference to having materials as resources, but rather having people as resources. One newer teacher stated, "I know that I have resources, having a ESE Support Facilitator." This teacher went on to say, "I think I've learned from [my

principal] to use your resources and she [the principal] is a big resource for us." Often these teachers acted as a resource to others. They stated this might be expressed in the form of modeling, and that they have been model teachers, taught a model lesson, hosted visiting observers as a model classroom, or hosted an intern. Another teacher felt that modeling professional behaviors as well as instructional expertise was important as a leader. Only then could she ask others to participate in an initiative or an innovation: "I just like all of these things I have to... I have to model it... I take responsibility... first and foremost."

Interpersonal skills – "Walk beside them in the challenge." There were many references to the interpersonal skills that allow the traits and characteristics of a leader to shine through – the qualities that drew them to others and that they believed drew others to them. These qualities stemmed from experiences in their own advice seeking as well as responding to requests for advice. These qualities included: having a positive attitude, empathy, drive, being approachable and collaborative, demonstrating trust, showing respect, and providing emotional support and encouragement.

Positivity. One teacher described it this way: "I think people just put out energy. And I think you feel energy when you walk into the room and you can tell." The teachers felt drawn to others who liked being teachers at their school and linked that to improvement and taking initiative as a leader. For example, "I think people who seem to genuinely enjoy their jobs, which is most people I know, but I think people who really just enjoy what they do are, you know, more motivated to be better at it." Teachers believed that having a positive attitude showed leadership because it helped the whole team: "Just being open with people who come to you ... if they're having a negative day... to try and spin it positive and bring out the good parts of it."

Drive. Many teachers mentioned having an inner drive to seek out knowledge. This drive is manifested by doing research and asking questions of others. This was also linked to holding each other accountable. After conducting her own independent research, one non-classroom teacher stated, "If I don't find it I seek somebody out is what I do." One co-facilitator balanced drive with compassion: "I think the motivation and drive and then also the compassion because you have to understand what everyone is going through to make the team work efficiently." This combination of drive and compassion can be manifested with empathy.

Empathy, approachability, trust, and respect. One characteristic highlighted by multiple teachers was the quality of empathy. They recognized the need for recognizing the hard work all teachers do, and the good work represented by those no matter their roles, position, or responsibility. One teacher offered a contrast to more authoritarian approaches to leadership:

I don't think you have to be authoritative necessarily to be a good leader. I think you have to be understanding. I think you have to be empathetic, because I have been there before and I remember when... I think putting yourself in their position and like what I said, like empathetic, is being a good leader.

Empathy and understanding in turn can result in approachability, trust and respect.

One interventionist reflected, "I don't think I'm like threatening at all... so I think that makes it comfortable for them to be vulnerable, like you know what I mean? It's not like judgy, I'm not going to run and tell anybody."

The trust and respect mentioned by teachers is in an individual capacity, between each other. Teachers referenced an individual's ability to demonstrate respect and instill trust in one another. Although ultimately this impacts school culture, it is a trust that originates with individuals, existing within but apart from school structures or supported by administration. Confidentiality is key. One PLC facilitator stated, "I just think we really have a cohesive team, like everybody feels um... like we feel like whatever happens on our team, it stays within our team." A non-classroom teacher that many within the network sought out for advice noted about her own perception of approachability,

We've all been there, so I think if you share your story, you -- the people will see you -- will see you and what you can help them with and that you're not there to get them, you're there to help them grow as a teacher and colleague.

Emotional support and encouragement. Teachers also referenced providing continuous emotional support and encouragement. This support can offset feelings of isolation: "Nobody wants to be that, by themselves, in this profession at all." They recognized that teacher leaders needed to balance advice giving with continuous encouragement: "I think it's somebody that's going to challenge them but also walk beside them in the challenge."

Collaboration. Collaboration follows approachability, trust, and encouragement. The collaboration teachers mentioned includes having a collaborative spirit, being willing to share and others recognizing that need within oneself to share. Once again, these are individuals speaking about their relationships. This is not about formal institutional collaboration, but an openness to share, the freedom to ask questions of each other, and the vulnerability that accompanies it. One

even expressed a felt need for this collaboration: “[My team mate] pulls things out of me.”

Culture:

Two themes emerged in culture: shared vision and administration.

Shared vision. Components of the culture that dominated discussions of teacher leadership and professional networks included maintaining a shared vision of high expectations through collaboration. Throughout the course of the interviews, it became apparent that these are tightly connected. One teacher concluded that, “Doing what’s best for the kids [ties it all together]. That’s kind of like our motto here of what’s best for kids.”

Administration. Although the study was originally designed to frame teacher leadership within this setting apart from administration, the teachers interviewed repeatedly came back around to the importance of their administration in their ability to express teacher leadership and the freedom to focus on leadership for instructional practice openly and fluidly. One teacher stated, “You could have the best teachers in the world, but if your administration isn’t there to tie it all together and lead you in the right direction, then it’s not going to go anywhere.” The administration attempts to know the strengths of their staff and encourages individuals to seek each other out: “[Administration] shares who is like the experts in those sorts of things or is innovating and has a new approach to it so that when we go to them.” Another teacher observed: “I think that helps [our principal] to know who she can ask to be leaders in what aspect because she knows everyone’s personality so well.” This highlights the importance of not just the trusting relationships the principal builds individually with each staff member, but the opportunity for the staff to build these trusting and respectful relationships with each other. This symbiotic leadership culture relies on both administrative support and teacher leadership. A classroom teacher who is not a PLC facilitator shared:

We are all leaders, and that everyone here, every day, has a voice. It’s not just one person on the team that has a voice. Everyone has a voice here. And any time that we ever have an issue, we know that we could bring it to everyone in that it would be addressed and cultivated to like, “Let’s fix it and see how we can go from there.”

Content Analysis for Efficacy:

Celebrations. Teacher leadership within these professional networks really sets the stage for the outcome of efficacy for improvement and innovation. The teachers reported that experiencing and publicly celebrating success led to positivity and a sense of accomplishment and engagement. The role of social media at this school in celebrating success cannot be ignored. The teachers, national consultants, and principal consistently tweet positive images of students and teachers in the classroom engaged in learning activities. One teacher observed:

I feel like it [Twitter] makes them feel positive about what they’re doing because then whenever it gets re-tweeted by [admin] or other people out there that it makes them like, “Oh, I guess I am doing something really good.”

Engagement. Teachers believed their engagement made them and others more likely to persevere, including students. A classroom teacher reflected that, “everyone here has a voice.” Teachers connected their voice, or empowerment, with efficacy for student achievement:

Oh, I think it’s huge. I think that everyone coming to work every day knowing that they’re doing their best and that everyone here is topnotch that I think it brings out, in everyone, that they are somebody and they’re making a difference.

Social media can also play a part in engagement. Another teacher reflected, “So, I was tweeting it all, and then I was getting all these people from who knows where like, “How do you do this?” I’ll tell you. This is what I do. So, it’s really neat.”

Content Analysis for Innovation:

It became apparent that instructional improvement and instructional innovation (Woodland, Barry, & Roohr, 2014) were closely linked within the perceptions of the teachers. Their responses concerning why they sought out individuals for improvement or innovation tended to be very similar. Often the rationale was similar for both, but the circumstances were unique. Improving practice responses revolved around general growth or questions around a content area, while innovative practice responses tended to center around individual students that presented a unique challenge.

Professional growth. One interviewee said teachers come to her for innovation when they “need something extra.” Another referenced the teacher evaluation model that utilized an observation rating of “Innovating” and sought out, or others sought her out, in order to prepare for achieving that rating during an observation. When asked about innovation, still another stated she had “a hard time distinguishing between an improvement and innovation,” but went on to relay a variety of unique situations in which she needed specialized advice from a more experienced peer concerning content and/or even parent interactions.

Inquiry. Questions played a distinct role throughout this study, but particularly in relation to improvement and innovation. Teachers mentioned feeling comfortable asking questions of each other and having the drive to seek out answers to questions.

Networks. The teachers often referred to “my team” as a source of advice in response to efforts for improvement and innovation. Members of these teaching teams include fellow same grade level classroom teachers and non classroom teachers such as interventionists and ESE specialists. One teacher noted, “Our reading intervention teacher she’s probably my primary resource for my reading questions.” One teacher knows her fellow team teacher’s experience as a coach helped provide expertise:

“What works best or what do they struggle with you know she’s good because she has those years of experience with that and she was our math coach when I was teaching third, she knows where the kids will struggle.”

Often, however, it is the shared experience of teaching the same grade level under current circumstances that prompts discussion and inquiry. The ties of the team are strong when seeking advice: “I would never even thought of leaving the building because I feel like there are so many people that you know I go to just on our own team.” However, sometimes this network can expand to the grade level above or below, depending upon the need.

DISCUSSION:

The findings reveal interconnected symbiotic relationships that were strengthened by the collaborative action teachers took to seek out advice, as well as the interactions as they shared advice as a leader. The act of advice-seeking and sharing occurred both individually and collectively as they worked within PLCs. Teachers also took the initiative to reach out to individuals outside their PLC or grade level teams when needed within a culture of inquiry. This environment is ripe for the application of the MCE. The following discussion exemplifies many of the characteristics and conditions supporting the use of collaborative evaluation processes within the school setting, with an emphasis on empowering teachers within their professional networks.

Teacher Leadership within Professional Networks:

Teacher leadership actions reflected those described in Fairman and Mackenzie’s (2012) Spheres of Teacher Leadership, including a drive to seek out knowledge, research information, reflect upon practice, and share their learning with others – both inside and outside the school. Teacher responses in the interviews indicated technical skills, interpersonal skills, and a culture that supports teacher leadership characterized the advice seeking networks for instructional practice revealed in the Social Network Analysis.

Synthesis of Social Network Analysis. The sociograms created as a result of SNA indicated that instructional support personnel, such as ESE teachers and interventionists, are viewed as prominent sources of advice within networks for instructional practice, improvement, and innovation. One category of instructional support personnel is not particularly more prominent than another category of support personnel. “We can all be leaders if we choose, even if our contribution to the relationship looks quite different from somebody else’s” (Donaldson, 2001, p. 153). For many of these teachers, administration was also viewed as a prominent source of advice. This may be in part due to the coaching experience administration has at the school. One of the administrators was a coach at the school in various capacities and had developed a history of advice giving within the network. Applying SNA to this case study painted a broader picture of the networks that exist than just interviews alone. It gave a more complete picture of the spaces, ties, or connections between and among individuals (Donaldson, 2007; Taylor et al, 2011) that make up this network for instructional practice. While collaborative relationships (Szczesniul & Huizenga, 2015) existed within the PLC, the sociograms indicated that individual teacher advice seeking networks existed both within and beyond the PLC.

Synthesis of technical skills. Experience, expertise, and being a resource were dominant themes in why leaders felt people came to them for advice and why they went to others for advice. These educators know whom to go to within their building based on grade level experience or content expertise. Teachers wanted to share their skills and knowledge with others, and they sought out ways to do so, such as mentoring, being a model classroom that others visit, modeling a single lesson for the PLC, or facilitating school-wide professional development (Cosenza, 2015).

Synthesis of interpersonal skills. The teachers interviewed sought advice from certain individuals because they felt comfortable going to them, and they believed that others came to them for similar reasons. From these teachers’ perspectives, positivity and personality played a key role in defining what makes a teacher leader. Approachability and empathy were valued in combination with the aforementioned technical skills. These relationships were strengthened by a willingness to collaborate and maintain trust (Szczesniul & Huizenga, 2015; Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). These teachers sought to demonstrate a drive to be a better teacher, do one’s personal best, and emotionally support others in their efforts to do the same.

Synthesis of culture. Teachers repeatedly referenced maintaining high expectations for student achievement as part of the school's shared vision. This created a felt need for teachers to constantly reflect upon the quality of instruction they were providing students. However, this felt need was paired with a shared leadership culture (Helterbran, 2010; Muijs & Harris, 2007) that supported and encouraged teachers to seek each other out for expertise. The role of administration in facilitating that culture was often reiterated in the interviews (Affolter & Hoffman, 2011; Taylor et al., 2011). Shared leadership has been defined as "principal leadership coupled with teacher leadership" (Helterbran, 2010, p. 365). This fosters a "collegial school culture" (Brosky, 2011, p. 6) in which teachers are motivated by that shared vision of student success to both reach out for and be willing to offer advice for instructional practice, improvement, and innovation (Frost, 2012). Reciprocal trust and shared leadership were key to maintaining a leadership culture (Beachum & Dentith, 2004).

Efficacy for Improvement and Innovation:

The pervasive message conveyed at this school that "all teachers are leaders" led to increased efficacy (Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). There was a perception that getting "better" professionally is aligned with "what's best for kids." The relational and contextual networks that emerged for student success (Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2011) were visible and explicit. Collective efficacy (Moolenaar, Slegers, & Daly, 2012) appeared to be most evidenced by teachers' perceptions of the team celebrations of student success, referenced and visualized within the formal PLC setting. Collective teacher efficacy has been linked with increased levels of teacher leadership (Donohoo, 2018). These positive experiences increased willingness to reach out to others in a supportive way. Individual teachers also felt supported by their administration when the principal recognized their individual or collective efforts for innovative instruction on social media, which reached a wider audience.

IMPLICATIONS:

Teacher Leadership:

Leadership described within the case study was distributed (Timperley, 2005) as the principal has selected individuals to head up specific initiatives, such as the formal PLC and some school-wide professional development. In addition, administration has encouraged individuals to seek each other out based on experience or expertise for additional assistance or direction on instructional matters. Bush and Glover (2014) link distributed leadership and teacher leadership when shared values exist. These teachers recognized each other as sources of instructional advice – even those that may not have a formal leadership role. Distributed leadership paired with teacher leadership for shared values produces a perception of shared leadership. This shared leadership strengthens the conditions for effective application of the MCE. The intersection of collaborative evaluation and network analysis can provide unique opportunities to further amplify teacher voice and agency within their professional networks. Instructional support personnel, or non-classroom teachers, proved to be prominent within this school's professional networks. The MCE along with network analysis provides an opportunity to uncover and engage all instructional personnel that can be positioned and supported as resources for the whole school professional network. Teacher leaders as indicated by SNA and their prominence in the network would bring strong technical and interpersonal skills to the school improvement and evaluation process as CMs. The collaboration across roles also indicates an environment supports the condition of trust strengthens the application of the MCE. In addition, identifying support personnel as prominent in the network indicates those individuals could be strong contributors as Collaboration Members within the needs assessment and ongoing improvement planning.

Inquiry for Innovation:

The nature of innovative practice may be better explained through Timperley, Ell, and LeFave's (2018) concept of adaptive expertise. Adaptive expertise requires both a deep understanding of the learner and her environment as well as a "deep knowledge base to address specific challenges" (p. 176) within that unique combination of learner and environment. One condition of adaptive expertise is deep inquiry that questions the status quo for student learning when changes need to be made. Often, asking questions is just as important as being able to answer them. Those who are sought out for advice can equally be engaged in advice seeking. In fact, the teachers interviewed valued their inquisitiveness and had a drive to seek answers, and they indicated that drive was part of being a leader. The act of asking a question can open up new lines of inquiry. Questions may be key to improvement and innovation. The MCE can help guide the process for inquiry and innovation in collaborative school improvement planning.

CONCLUSION:

The teachers in this study linked their identity as a leader strongly with the culture of leadership, the exchange of advice, and the shared values of high expectations for themselves and their students that exist within a collaborative school setting. The teachers believed they could be leaders within this setting because "we are all leaders here." Their responses indicated they believed in their collective capacity and their trust in and support of each other within professional networks, in order to accomplish the shared mission of student achievement.

This case revealed that non classroom teachers and administration can have a prominent position within patterns of instructional advice-seeking that include both formal PLC structures and more informal self-selected opportunities for

exchanging advice. Non classroom teachers believed that their ability to emotionally support and "walk beside" teachers in the challenge to improve instruction was a key element in their role as a leader. Social network analysis of combined network data (observational, survey, interview), as well as teacher interview comments, also revealed that the school's administration played a significant role within networks for improvement and innovation. This prominent position of administration reinforces the influence school leaders can have for building a culture that has the potential to impact instructional practices for improvement and innovation at their schools. The MCE can help guide these synergetic relationships characterized by active, on-going communication (Rodríguez-Campos, 2012) within the school improvement process to conduct a needs assessment that more accurately identify the conditions for improvement. Collaborative evaluation is easily embedded within existing school dynamics when teachers and administrators have an established working relationship based on open communication, trust and a shared moral purpose. Together, administration and teachers can create a synergetic, values driven relationship of shared leadership that builds collective efficacy for student achievement.

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APPENDIX

